

# THE BIG SHOW

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BY ELSIE JANIS



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A VERY SMART LITTLE FRENCH TRENCH

# The Big Show

My Six Months With The  
American Expeditionary Forces

By  
Elsie Janis



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## Dedication

*To the A.E.F., with all my love,  
I dedicate this book,  
And hope if they ever read it,  
They will smile with me and look  
Back on the "good times" over there,  
And think only of the day  
When after their work was done I came  
And then we would start to play.  
Oh; it was fun, wasn't it, "fellahs"?  
I'll say it was "some swell guerre,"  
For I lost my heart to each one of you  
In the big show "Over There."*

ELSIE JANIS.





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## INTRODUCTION

**I**N April, 1914, I made my first appearance in England at the Palace Theater, London. The British public opened its arms to me, and I crept in with a joyous heart. I made many dear friends and was thoroughly happy.

In August the great blow fell upon the world. Suddenly England was at war. The theaters still went on, people stood the shock wonderfully, and in a few days one hundred thousand of England's best had been spirited away and were landed in France—while we were still wondering when they would go! About ten per cent of my friends went with them, some never to return, but to make history and cover themselves with glory that can never be forgotten.

It was not surprising that, arriving home in America in October, 1914, with "Tipperary" ringing in my ears and visions of hundreds of brave men singing as they marched away, I should have been a bit disappointed in the neutral attitude of most of my friends. Having seen the Americans, as I have, in France since then, I don't believe they know the meaning of the word "neutral." They were not that—they were loyal.

Their President said be neutral, and they were—loyal to him.

After three months in America we sailed again for England—January 30, 1915—on the *Lusitania*, the time when the submarine lay in wait for her, and that wonderful man Captain Paddy Dow set us out in the middle of a hurricane until dawn and then came in flying the American flag. Exit subs. in consternation and some speed.

I played again at the Palace, and now began my first real taste of war. The wounded were coming home in thousands; the camps were full; and I spent every spare moment I had, and some I did not have, singing in hospitals and camps. It was then I learned what a little amusing story or a song can mean to a man before he goes into a fight or after he has “got his.”

In July, 1915, my dear friend and fellow-player Basil Hallam heard the call of his country more than the cheers and applause of the public, and he enlisted or rather insisted, as he had been turned down as unfit several times.

I did not want to continue without him, so again we went to America. In the meantime the *Lusitania* had been sunk and America was growing restive in spots.

When the next summer came around I heard the call of the War again, and instead of settling down at our home, Mother and I dashed over to England



again. Dodging submarines was now becoming a habit. We spent six weeks in London, during which time I did not play at all, but sang every day and all day to the poor Tommies who had already been at it nearly two years.

The day that we were sailing back home to take up my winter contracts in New York, I received word that my dear friend Basil Hallam had "gone west," as the British call the glory of dying for their country.

I was never really happy again until April 7, 1916, when America stepped in to take her share of the burden and the glory of the world. From that time on I had but one idea, and that was to get to France and do for our boys what I had done for the others—for I thought, if the Tommies liked me in their own land and surrounded by their own families, what would our boys feel, three thousand miles away from home?

So I started in at home, recruiting, playing benefits, and doing a very "war-mad" act in vaudeville, singing patriotic songs, etcetera, and telling everyone I was going to France. No one quite believed it, and to me it seemed almost too good to be true, but it was! And when I got there I met in every corner fellows who said, "I saw you out in 'Frisco"—or some other place; "when you said you were coming over here first, I never thought you would do it, but by gosh! you did." And

though all the men would place wreaths on my brow and the folks at home write me how wonderful they think it was my giving up work and money to go over, I want to say that I deserve no credit, really. I could not help it. War had me and still has me, and my life really began when I set my foot or rather both my feet, and Mother's feet, in France, for be it understood that when I say "I" it means "*we*," for she was with me, and a much better soldier than I was, as all the men I had the honor of singing to will testify.

I did not mean to ramble on so in this chapter, but I only wanted to explain why I am a "war nut" before I started to write about my trip. I wanted people to know why we went. I know they will all understand why we stayed six months, and forgot such things as real theaters existed.

We were in the

BIG SHOW!

# THE BIG SHOW

## CHAPTER I

1918—WE LEAVE FOR FRANCE

**D**IFFERENT people have different ideas of what happens to us hereafter if we don't behave. I have my own theory on the subject.

The guy who wobbles along the "straight and narrow" while in our midst is in the hereafter sentenced to one long effort to get a passport in war-time, it being understood that the Kaiser will be there teaching the devil Kultur that we could not quite get next to on this earth.

They were very nice about our passports, really; but I saw more of New York than I ever did before, and I am convinced that they hide the passport bureaus 'way down in the ankles of the City, hoping that the passport seekers will get so tired that they will miss the boat. We just made ours—the *Espagne*. As we had crossed five times during the War, our friends all wore a sort of "What—again?!" expression. They gave parties for us,

which were rather more like "wakes," and I know that while we were dancing, singing and having a wonderful time generally on that ship, at least three dear souls were praying for our safety—bless them! It worked. We had a splendid trip. We had all that money I had been collecting from Mr. Keith's circuit to spend on the trip—so we started right in and took the suite de luxe. A more distingué crowd you could not imagine on ship-board, and we had that splendid assurance of dying in good company.

Nothing happened, outside of a rather comic life-boat drill, after which I decided to take the freedom of the seas rather than get in a boat with about thirty of the feminine gender, in the midst of whom I should have had to get up and give my seat to a lady, or at least stroke the crew!

One man appeared on deck with one of those wonderful life-saving suits with everything but hot and cold running water in them. It was marvelous. They advertise that it will hold up eight people, but somehow I would prefer not to sell reserved seats for my life preserver in case the ones who were being saved got excited and forgot about the one who had paid the sixty dollars—until they saw bubbles coming up from where he had been before they pushed him under in their enthusiasm over being saved.

We had a wonderful concert, and as it was a



French ship several of the artistes sang in French. I sang in English and had quite a success with the French people on board. Perhaps they did not understand me. I sang "Over There" and they *all* joined in the gestures.

The night before we landed, the Captain came down to dinner for the first time, having stayed on the bridge every night looking for trouble. He made a speech, and asked a charming French singer to sing "La Marseillaise." She did so, beautifully. Then everyone turned on me, and asked for "Over There." I believe that the French people think it is our National Anthem. I was glad they did not ask for the "Star-Spangled Banner," for though that wonderful song is splendid when played by a band or sung by one good voice, nothing is more pathetic than the average crowd of Americans singing it. It usually sounds something like this:

Oh! say, can you see, by the ja ba jum da—  
La, da, da,—la, da, da, etc.,

until the finish, when they all join in asking with fervor if the Star-Spangled Banner still waves—knowing very well she is waving better every day.

However, we all sang "Over There," and we all meant it. I doubt if anyone was quite as enthusiastic the next morning on landing, when we really found out the meaning of the word "rationed."

Arriving at Bordeaux (such a pretty name! sug-



gesting grapes, red wine, etc., and looking very much like Jersey City only more so) we were a little disappointed. I, for one, expected American troops to be there and decide whether we should land or not. The first soldiers we saw, however, were German prisoners, very pleased to see us or anything else but the front line trenches. Two Y.M.C.A. men were charming to us—and I then found out that where there are Young Christians there are young Henry Fords. We leapt into one with joy, and went to the hotel, where we had breakfast with—No meat, no bread except of dusky hue, no butter, no sugar, no jam, no nothing—and very little of that—but *we were* in France! and I could have existed a week on “joy.”

On the way up to Paris we saw our first American troops, who were busy putting in a few miles of railroad in a couple of hours—or at least when you see the miles and miles of American rails in France you decide that must be about their speed.

Paris, City of Night!

We arrived in Paris at eight-thirty. I remember thinking London in 1916 was dark, but it was Coney Island on Sunday compared to Paris; and to add to the gayety of our arrival, it was raining. I suggested a taxi would be nice, to the four porters who were in charge of some “light”(?) luggage, and they all attacked me at once. But the French sounded so good to me that I laughed and asked

what they would suggest. One said there was no choice, we must walk to the Crillon! Just then a fellow-passenger produced the oldest living cab, horse and driver—combined ages about one hundred and ninety. It was decided that we would walk, and Josephine, our maid, would risk her life and go in the ancient cab. So we put a barrage of bags around her and sent her on. We started to walk. As we were feeling our way across the Place de la Concorde we hear a terrific row, and instinctively we felt that Josephine and the luggage had missed the street. We were right. A taxi had driven into the entourage, knocked the horse down—and we arrived on the scene just in time to stop the taxi driver from going on his way. Such a mess! The horse was so old he could not get up, and the driver was so old he could not get down. Our fellow-passenger pulled the cab, assisted by our faithful chauffeur. I led the horse. Mother scolded the taxi driver on one side and sympathized with the old cabby on the other. Josephine could do nothing, as she was completely hidden and forgotten beneath her barrage of bags inside the cab. This merry little party made its way to the Crillon Hotel. We paid the ancient one enough money to buy a new cab, a horse, and insure them!

The porters of the hotel looked at me a little askance as I led my poor old friend the horse up to the front door; but as the price of Americans

was going up every minute in France, I think they would have even tried to find a bed for the horse.

The Crillon we found rather changed since the War, but it was wonderful to see clerks, elevator boys, waiters, etc., with medals hanging all over them—some with arms, eyes or even legs missing—but a smile of welcome that the French know so well how to “put over,” as we say.

Paris at last!

No food after eight-thirty—no lights to speak of—no hot water, but *Paris!* and there is only one, *n'est-ce pas?*

### PARIS THE GLORIOUS!

The next day was a lovely one, and Paris looked her best. I say I could not see any suggestion of sadness anywhere; but then I am not a judge, for I have the faculty of not seeing sadness, and it's a good thing, as my job was to be merry and bright.

When I left home we had no arrangement with the Red Cross or Y.M.C.A.; we came ostensibly to fulfill contracts in Paris and London. But the Y.M.C.A. was right on the job that very next day after our arrival. They had a map of France with dots all over it, showing where the Americans were in France—and where their circuit would take me if I would go. At first I was not too keen on being with the Y.M.C.A. It sounded rather like it might cramp my speed—and I asked them quite frankly



if my friends could come to the shows whether they were Young Christians or not! They explained that they had only one idea, that was to make the boys happy. As we had the same idea, we agreed to start at once. That very afternoon they sent a pianist up, and we rehearsed. I must say for a Christian Association they have some speed. It was arranged I would start on tour one week later, and in the meantime would practice on the soldiers in and around Paris. The following day we had to dash about getting permission to remain in Paris—a very trying tour of offices—explaining to at least five French officials, who really did not care at all, who your father and mother were, where you were born—and why! After that another tour for bread tickets. We dragged ourselves home thoroughly agreeing with Sherman, and found that it was a *meatless day!!*

After getting very chummy with a piece of fish, I put on my little pleated blue skirt which I wore all over France; all the time we were there I never wore a real evening gown but three times!—and at that I had a cold most of the time. I ran through my songs, thought up a few stories and started out to try myself on the boys for the first time. It was at the Pavillon—a hotel which they had taken over for our men.

Of course from the work I had done in camps and hospitals in England and at home, I knew

pretty well what the fellows liked—but I never realized what it would mean to them to see a girl from home that they knew, more or less. They cheered so long and so loud when I appeared that I nearly burst into tears, but finally burst into song instead—which is nearly as sad. However, to them I was Melba and Pavlova. I sang “When Yankee Doodle Learns to Parlez-Vous Français,” which was quite unknown at the time, for my first song. I told some stories—sang “Cleopatra”—more stories—then “The Ragtime Strutters’ Ball,” and finished up with “Over There,” in which they all joined.

Of course the real joy to me was that they liked just *me* and did not ask me to imitate someone else. I was so proud of that. I was on about thirty-five minutes that night, and when I finally tore myself away (I did not want to leave at all!) went home, sat down and cried from sheer joy! Mother cried, too; in fact, we enjoyed ourselves a lot.

When my French managers came next day to talk business and find out when I would play, we informed them that we could do nothing for at least a month, but that I would play at the end of that time. And we really believed it when we said it. Little did we know the spell of the A.E.F.

This first appearance was on Saturday, and for one week we went every night to places around Paris where our boys were. One night to a tractor



school—next to some anti-aircraft boys—then out to some poor engineers who were only an hour from Paris, but not allowed in the city. There were only about two hundred of them, but if they were as wild as they sounded, they were quite right to keep them out of a tame little town like Paris.

They had a marvelous cook from the South who gave me a raisin pie. I don't know how he knew that raisin pie had always been the blot on my moral escutcheon, but anyway I fell, and sang three extra songs!

The next night after that, I gave two shows in Paris. One at the Rue St. Anne Y.M.C.A., and the other at the Avenue Montaigne Club. These were both very nice, but I must admit I am a "roughneck"—for whenever there was any suggestion of a social side to these things I was not so keen. I liked the places where we had to go through mud, climb things, etc., to get there.

Another night we went to the famous old Fort Destinn. It did seem strange to see Americans installed there—and with them American comforts such as electric lights, hot water, etc. The French Commandant was still there—though rather in the position of a guest it seemed to me. I gave the show in a sort of a long tunnel, underground, very damp and cold, but once the boys got in and lit up, it was almost cozy. By this time my show was

pretty well in shape, and lasted from thirty-five to forty-five minutes—sometimes more.

We stayed in Paris ten days. About eight of them were spent in trying to explain to the French Government what right we had to leave. After asking for permission to remain, they could not see where I got on or off in the War. I was not an “*infirmère*”—I did not deal out chocolate and terrible smelling smokes in a canteen—I did not even drive an ambulance—and yet I wanted to go to the Front. *Pourquoi?* To amuse the soldiers. *Mon Dieu!* was not the War amusement enough?

I was a well-known actress—ah! well, that they began to understand, and draw their most French conclusions! But *sapristi!* no! she has a Mother with her, who is always with her! *Quel blague!* poor girl, we will do her a favor and get her a little freedom.

Mlle. Janis may go, but the French Military do not wish any more women than necessary in the danger zone. Whereupon Miss Janis threatened to turn all of France into a danger zone if they tried to cut into a combination that experts have tried to wreck.

Well, that took another three days to sink into about ten heads. Nothing is done with one head in military circles in France. They even shoot their traitors in “job lots.”

Well, of course, we waited—and I am not trying

to give the impression that it was a hardship. Paris was full of Americans. We had a lovely apartment at the Crillon, where we kept open house every afternoon, and decided it was a "good War."

## WHERE ARE YOU, GOD? \*

Where are you, God,  
In whom I have believed?  
Are you in Heaven?  
Have I been deceived?  
I can't believe you sit up there  
And look down on us all,  
Seeing the horrors of this earth,  
Seeing the brave men fall.  
I'm praying to you.  
Are you there?  
Can you hear me call?  
Where are you, God?

Where are you, God,  
In whose hands this great world  
Is like a tiny ball,  
That can be turned and twirled?  
I can't believe that you have seen  
The things that they have done.  
With poison gas and crucifixions  
Battles have been won,  
And yet upon this earth of yours  
There still exists the Hun.  
Where are you, God?

---

\* Written after the sinking of the *Lusitania*.

## THE BIG SHOW

Where are you, God,  
In whom I put my trust?  
You must be there,  
And you are great and just;  
Your mighty sea they've turned into a grave,  
A little baby slumbers on each wave,  
And on the lips of hundreds  
One word—Save!  
Where are you, God?

Forgive me, God,  
If I have doubted you,  
For in my heart  
I know what you will do,  
Quite soon now you will  
Send us our release,  
Quite soon in your own way  
You'll tell us—Cease!—  
And with one mighty stroke,  
You will send Peace,  
For *You are there!*



## CHAPTER II

### BONSOIR, GOTHAS!

PARIS had not been raided for quite some time. People had almost forgotten to show the new arrivals the spot in the Place de la Concorde where an aviator fell in the last raid. It was *old stuff*. The Germans had reformed.

*Pense-tu!* They were only waiting for us. In the old Zeppelin days in England we never had the luck to see one. They used to come over and we would read about them next day and hope for better luck next time. So we really knew no more about air raids than they know in Berlin.

However, one can learn a lot about them in a very short time. As I think, Berlin may agree one day soon!

It was the night before we were supposed to leave Paris. I say that, because no one ever really leaves Paris just when they planned to do so. We went to dinner with some Anglo-French friends at their house. We were about twelve, a very gay party, mixing our French and English and American into a cocktail of good-fellowship.

I think it was in the midst of the *salade* that the



butler came and stood between the hostess and the gentleman on her left, and addressing them both, said: "The Gothas have arrived, my lady. . . . Will you have port, sir?"

The word Gotha at that time meant nothing in my life, but suddenly to my wide-open ears came the most diabolical wail, sounding like a Hippodrome Chorus of lost souls. Our hostess smiled sweetly and said, "*Ah oui! voilà la sirène!*" and that was all.

I looked at Mother, whose black eyes looked like shoe buttons in milk—and alive with expectancy, I let my gaze wander around the table, rather hoping to see one worried look. But no! they were all toying with an unsuspecting peach Melba. So I took a long breath and leapt onto mine as if it had been a German.

Remarks about other raids and how many were killed floated on cigarette smoke, and were swallowed with a bit of peach Melba. Suddenly Mother came to. She realized that Mousme, our ten-year-old "Peke," Josephine and a very dear girl friend were at the hotel. I mention Mousme first, because with all due respect to everyone that is her position in our family. Mother thought she must telephone, but she was wrong, because telephoning is not being done in the best families during an air raid; but we were assured that the guests in hotels were requested gently but firmly to descend into

the *cave*—so that was that! By this time I had thoroughly bayoneted my peach in its most vital spots, and I could resist no longer, so assuming my most blasé tone of voice, I said: “Do you suppose they are over us now?”

“*Mais non!*” they all cried. “It’s always at least twenty minutes before they arrive after the first ‘*alerte.*’ One must wait for the ‘*tir du barrage.*’”

Ah! Now I understood the calmness of everyone. I thought—Boom! boom! boom! went the guns in the suburbs of Paris.

“*Voilà!*” cried one tiny French miss, “they are coming!”

Boom! boom! boom! This time much nearer.

Coffee was served. I think I put salt in mine instead of sugar.

Boom! This time under my chair, it seemed. I found myself wanting to be near Mother so we might share the same bomb as we have always shared our joys and sorrows.

Someone went to the window and opened it. The noise was deafening. “They are here,” said the window-opener. “Listen, you can hear the ‘planes.”

I swallowed my salted coffee and ran to the window. Sure enough—“Brrr, brrr, brrr,” sang the engines. I forgot everything in my anxiety to see.

“Pit pat, pit pat,” something was falling like rain.

"Shrapnel," said the hostess.

Boom! brrr—gush!

"*Une bombe*," said a lady with no back in her dress. I found myself wondering if she was not cold.

*Une bombe!* and perhaps twenty souls hurled into eternity without a warning. I came back to earth with a thud. Mother's hand was in mine and the guests had gone into the drawing-room, already bored by the monotony of the guns. I squeezed Mother's hand and said, "Well, dear, if our numbers are up, we will exit together."

From that night I have never felt the slightest tremor even under fire at the Front. I have always felt that so many nice people have left this earth lately that one would have as many if not more friends on the other side. We went back into the drawing-room, where to the tune of the "Livery Stable Blues" we danced through the rest of the raid, which lasted an hour and a quarter.

I am sure the Angel Gabriel will have a hard time to blow as glorious a call as that little French bugler blew when the "All clear!" signal is given.

Ta ta ta ta ta tum; ta ta—ta ta ta tum—ta ta toot—Too—too—too!

It does not look like much on paper, but it sounds heavenly! I am not sure he is not Gabriel rehearsing . . . for the great day.

When we got back to the hotel, fully expecting to

have to go down in the "cave" and drag Mousme, Josephine and our friend out from under a case of wine, we found them standing in front of the hotel looking like Cook's tourists. They were ahead of us. They had seen the Germans. Curses!

## THE Y.M.C.A. CIRCUIT

The Huns came the next two nights. In the hotels they put all lights out when the "*alerte*" is given. So the good old-fashioned candle has come into its own again. The second one we were at the theater—in the midst of a scene a man walked on the stage and said, "*Messieurs et Mesdames, les Gothas sont arrivés—la représentation continuera*"—and walked off.

There was a buzz all over the theater. I translated it to our American friends for whom it was too fast, the man being rather in a hurry it seemed.

All our party thought the raid would be more amusing than the show, so we went out into the inky darkness, tried to lure a taxi into taking us to the Crillon. He wanted forty francs, which we thought a little high even for an air raid, so we wandered home, arm in arm—looking for things in the sky, trying to make ourselves believe that a shooting star was a *falling Boche* airplane, and when we reached the hotel the "*berloque*" (All clear!) was given. It was a *fausse alerte*. So we missed both shows.



Two days later we started on our first trip, in a Packard twin-six limousine (very hard war!). Mother, the pianist, a very nice-looking and un-Christian-like Y.M.C.A. man, the chauffeur—not ours, because he not being a Christian was not allowed to drive a Christian Packard.

We left our maid and our girl friend (who was by this time canteening busily) in our apartment. There is no reason why I should make a mystery out of our girl friend by not telling her name, only I decided I would make it a rule not to mention names; for if I tried to mention all the people who were nice to us in France, my story would never be finished in time to be read by this generation. And then I was told by our Big Boss General when I joined the A.E.F. that soldiers do not mention names of towns, divisions; in fact silence in the army is more than golden—it is platinum.

In writing about this first trip, I am going to quote my diary and save all those superfluous “the next day” and “the day after that.”

This is what I wrote at the time.

*Tuesday.*

*Hôtel Jeanne d'Arc, Mailly.*

Got up at ten. The Huns killed and injured seventy-nine in the raid last night. Swine!

We left Paris after lunch, lovely day—it seemed quite like old times to be motoring again in France.



The roads are not bad. The country is cultivated to the last inch—and all done by the women.

We arrived here at five-thirty. Were met by the Colonel, came to this comic little hotel. Jeanne d'Arc has a lot to answer for if she is to answer for this "joint." Mailly is the largest French artillery camp and school. There are thousands of Yanks here. We dined with the officers, where they told me that the Cinema Hall would not half hold the crowd; so I gave one show there in the mess hall for the officers, then went on and gave another in the Cinema Hall for the men. A great bunch! fifty minutes' show!

Went to General C.'s house afterwards—he is very young for a General. He formally made me a brigadier-general by pinning one of his silver stars on me. There were two French generals there and a flock of colonels, majors, etc.

When we got back to Jennie Ark's hotel we stumbled upstairs by the light of a match and found that the very nice Y.M.C.A. girls had put hot water bottles in our otherwise Labradorian beds. They were nice—and what credit those girls deserve! We think we are doing something staying here one night—they stay here all the time—in a plethora of the finest mud I've ever seen.

*Wednesday.*

*Hôtel de France, Chaumont.*

*American G.H.Q.*

Got up at nine. The Y. girls got our breakfast. Geo. Washington coffee.

Went to the camp hospital, where they have a gang with the Mumps! Having had them I went in and gave a show. They were so grateful, as they thought they would not see me. Went into the officers' mess—said good-by, and left Mailly at about two. Arrived Chaumont at five. Had a bite of dinner in our room. Nearly froze. Asked for a fire and nearly started another war. Went to Y. hut, gave an hour's show to about two thousand. Someone yelled for me to imitate Will Rogers. I said I couldn't because I had no rope—and some cowboy produced one. I was "stung" but made it go, and danced in it. Riot!

Rather tired tonight—not such a bad hotel, but Captain Kidd was an amateur compared to these little hotelkeepers. Now is their chance, and they are taking it. "*Vive les Américains!*" they say, and charge you forty francs for a room—just a room, that's all. But why shouldn't they? After all, they have paid in a way that money can never make up for.

*Thursday. Chaumont.*

Got up at ten—lovely day, but I never expect to





A CROWD OF REGULAR GUYS AT JOHNS HOPKINS HOSPITAL—BAZOILLES

(See page 22)





be warm again, except around the *heart*. That part of me is on fire all the time, seeing our wonderful boys. At two o'clock we went out to the big local hospital—wonderfully run by an all-American staff. I gave one show in the Red Cross hut. Got a note from the boys who were quarantined, saying: "Dear Miss Janis, we can't get out, but won't you come and sing one song under our windows? Signed, Scarlet Fever—Mumps—Meningitis and other Bugs."

I went, of course, and told them stories and sang—then went through the wards singing and kidding with them. Two hundred and forty American wounded came in yesterday.

At five-thirty we went down to Y. hut—met a lot of the French, English and American officers—then home—had a bite to eat while dressing.

At seven-thirty gave another show at the big hut, two thousand more. Went on to officers' club, and gave them a show—then came home, nearly dead. The big General is away with Secretary B. He left nice messages for me—sorry not to have seen him—they say he is *some man*!

*Friday.*

*An Old Château. Bourmont.*

Got up at ten. Packed up—talk about one-night stands! Left Chaumont after lunch—stopped at Bazoilles. Another big base hospital run by

Johns Hopkins Unit. Met officers and nurses. They were so nice and have had no amusement for seven months—promised to come back tomorrow and give a show. Came on to this town—very quaint place on the side of a hill. On arrival saw crowds of U.S. troops entrain going to the Front. There is no hotel here, so we are in a funny old house and waiting on ourselves. There is apparently no one else here, it's quite spooky. Dined in a queer little room with five officers, then went to "hut"—a very rough one. Outside the door was a sign:

TONIGHT AT SEVEN-THIRTY  
AMERICA'S GREATEST ACTRESS  
ELSIE JANIS

Poor boys! It's a shame to bring them three thousand miles from home and then swindle them like that. About fifteen hundred men were due to entrain at eight, but General B. allowed them to come to the show. They had full equipment, tin hats and all. After the show they marched to the train cheering and singing my version of "Over There," called "Over Here." The General thanked me and said I had put "pep" enough into them to make them walk right into Germany singing.

Went to officers' club for a few minutes and then back to our merry little dungeon—*two candles* only.

One joy in this lightless life is that I can't even see my face—so I don't know if I am looking badly.

Mother has a terrible cold and I am getting one. I wonder why France goes in for damp sheets?

*Saturday.*

*Hôtel de l'Europe, Langres.*

Took a long walk this morning up the hill to the ruins of old Duke de Bourmont's Castle. Somebody sure did *ruin it*. Left Bourmont at twelve, went back to Bazoilles as promised. Had lunch with the nurses. The hospital is full. Gave one show in the hut and then went into eight wards singing and telling stories. One boy that they said could not live asked me to sing the "Homesickness Blues." I did, and he joined in the chorus. He promised me to get well.

Came on to Langres. One of the most picturesque old towns in France, with ramparts and a wall around it. Also on a hill. They must have been very "snoopy" in the old days, from this town—no neighboring village could slip anything over. We dined in our rooms, then went to the hut. An enormous double one. Gave an hour's show. They were so enthusiastic I hated to leave, but what voice I never had is walking out on me, I'm afraid.

Met General S.—very nice. My goodness, but the woods are full of Generals! My cold is very bad, just my luck!

*Sunday,  
Hôtel de la Clothe, Dijon.*

Woke up and found I could scarcely speak. Terrible pains in head and nose. Left Langres at noon and came on here. Wonderful hotel—first running water we've seen. I felt so badly sent for a doctor from the American hospital here. He came and said I could not possibly go out, so we had to cancel the concert for tonight. I am broken-hearted. The doctor says I have inflammation of the frontal sinus—sounds almost unladylike. To bed at once and *flocks of inhalations*. How I hate missing a show! What bad luck! Hot water, and the doctor wouldn't let me take a bath! Sunday, too!



## CHAPTER III

### BIRTH OF BIG BERTHA

**T**HAT trip was much too short and sweet. We stayed in Dijon for three days—and then the doctor said I could not possibly go on and be exposed to the dangers of singing in hospitals, camps, etc. So we went back to Paris, where I had two doctors and was confined to our apartment for one week. The third morning after we returned, we were awakened by the sirens, which were followed by large booms at regular intervals of twenty minutes. “Zeppelins!” everyone said. Zepps flying at a great height!

Poor unsuspecting aviators were sent up almost to the gates of heaven and came down with ears and nose bleeding from the high altitude only to report—Nothing was up there except a few idle angels, and surely they had no bombs concealed under their wings.

These “booms” continued all day. People went about their work—children played in the Tuileries—poor souls left their homes never to return again. Personally I realized how Mr. Damocles must have felt with the sword hanging over his head. My

own head caused me great pain, if I even turned it. So I lay there with my eyes on the clock and my hands on said head and counted the minutes between explosions, and piled up hate in "gobs" against the Boche.

At about four the "booms" ceased. The *berloque* blew gayly. The evening papers announced that our brave airmen had driven off the foe, and that the Germans had started an offensive on an enormous front, and had thrown forty divisions against the British.

"Could the British hold them?!" everyone asked.

That evening a friend called on the 'phone to tell us that it was a long-range gun that had been ruining our day.

I said, "Don't kid me. I am ill." But he insisted.

A little later the *sirène* sighed once more and there was an air raid. So altogether Big Bertha made quite a stunning début.

The late night paper announced: "Germans advancing. British fighting one man against four"—and another headline: "Paris bombarded from a distance of seventy miles."

"Impossible!" said Paris, quite forgetting for the moment that no "outrage" is impossible for the Huns!

Bertha's début from the Hun point of view was

not such a success, as she only killed one or two, but of course she was only a beginner.

The next morning at seven the Huns were on the job, Bertha coughing with great regularity. I woke with a jump that landed me nearly into Mother's room, but then went back to sleep. Bertha kept it up all morning. I heard her vaguely and dreamed I was a sniper, camouflaged as a tree-stump picking off Huns by the dozen.

At lunchtime Bertha stopped for two hours. The Germans must eat!

The real Parisians behaved wonderfully. The floating population floated out of Paris as quickly as trains, motors, trucks and even weary cab-horses could take them. Some said eight hundred thousand people left in a week, but they were not missed, because everyone who had a real job that meant anything to the War stuck to it like a poor relation. And believe me, it was trying. The gun all day and air raids every night. Verily, the Hun was making a big and far-reaching offensive.

The third day Bertha coughed five times and then stopped, choked by her own importance, I think. She was silent for three days. Everyone said our aviators had hit her where the chicken got the ax, but it turned out that she had religious ideas and thought the better the day the better the deed, for on Good Friday morning she came to with a roar. She hit a church full of people,



killed seventy-six, wounded ninety. Of all the horrible things they have done, this to me was the most tragic. The victims were mostly mothers, sisters and wives offering a prayer for their dear ones.

But even this tragedy did not touch the courage of Paris, for there were bigger things to face.

The Germans were advancing. The British held them valiantly for two days and then the Boche broke through with fury. They had taken St. Quentin, Péronne, Baupaume, Noyon—and were nearly to Amiens; our big American General came forward and said every man and gun of the American Army was at the service of the French, to do with as they would. Surely these were great days to be living in.

Bertha barked every day, rain or shine—and sometimes at night.

The Huns came and dropped hell from the sky. Many people were killed in Paris, but the one great thought was that the Germans must be stopped, and they were! With Amiens almost in their grasp they were stopped.

Everyone heaved a sigh of relief. Some bought drinks on the strength of it. There was a wave of gayety. The theaters filled up to overflowing, and the next day the big gun hit a nursery and killed thirty mothers and babes!

No, the Hun was not stopped.

After one of the most hectic days and nights I



ever hope to have we started out on our second trip.

By this time they had passed a law allowing no motors to leave Paris without special permission. So we had rather a hard time, but finally made a "getaway" again in the Packard—and though I should never have left Paris during her days of stress had my work not been elsewhere, I don't mind admitting that we were glad to get out—for compared to Paris (as many of the boys on leave said) any old battle front was like Philadelphia on Sunday.

#### SOLDIERS, AND THEN MORE SOLDIERS

*Friday. Nevers.*

Left Paris at noon, stopped at dear old Fontainebleau for lunch. When I say *dear* old Fontainebleau I mean it. Our lunch at the Hôtel de France et Angleterre cost so much I wanted to give it back. They are such splendid robbers there that they had to add Angleterre to their name as a sort of protection. There were some Americans "even there," dressed in French blue, studying gunnery at the French artillery school. How did we guess that they were Americans? Heard them ordering lunch in French!

We raced a Rolls-Royce on the way down, and trimmed it "so pretty."

Arrived here at six—changed—and went to dinner with the officers. It is really a shame the way the American Army is picked on regarding food! We only had soup, eggs, fish, two kinds of meat—salad, custard, tarts and a few other little things, poor boys! War is ——!

After dinner we drove out to the engineers' camp. The show was in what is called a *round-house*—really a repair shop for sick engines.

When we arrived they said they had a good entrance for me if I was not afraid. I murmured, "You know me, Al. Lead me to it!" So I rode up a track in the middle of the place on a regular Baldwin locomotive, not in the cab, but on the cow-catcher, waving my free arm. The fellows fell back on either side and the engine took me right up to the platform, then "toot-tooted" and backed out.

What a wonderful crowd!

I sang, told stories and cut up generally for an hour. They had some local talent—a quartette that was splendid. They taught me the following to the tune of the "Old Gray Mare":

Oh, Uncle Sammy, he's got artillery,  
He's got the infantry,  
He's got the cavalry.  
But when he wants to get into Germany  
He'll send for the Engineers!

There were four thousand of them—all I have to say is Heaven help the Germans if he does!

*Saturday.*

*Issoudun, Flying School.*

Left Nevers at noon. Had lunch at Bourges. Went up and took a look at the Cathedral. Mother loves them—personally I have waited outside of some of the finest ones in Europe. Not being a Catholic I always have the feeling I may be intruding. However, we arrived here at three—apparently most of the W.W.'s (wild women) who did not crave Big Bertha's conversation came down here. The hotel is full of "cuties" (not cooties). We had to fight for our *room*—singular, please note. A comic room with two serio-comic beds—covered with two of those enormous comfortables that the French hide their beds under—about two feet thick. And once under, your best friend could not find you. If as a child you have ever hidden under a haystack—you may grasp the idea.

We left the hotel at five and drove out to the flying fields.

After riding over the road, I was ready to fly anywhere with anyone rather than return over the same road.

*Sunday.*

I still have a cold, so stayed in bed all day and got up in time to go out and give one show, at Valentine Field.

They have one wonderful dancer here—a young flyer who does steps that would make most professionals sit up and bite their nails with envy. Also a fine jazz band.

*Monday.*

*Château Mon Repos, Blois.*

Here we have fallen in right. Mr. and Mrs. C., Americans, asked us to stop with them as the hotels were all full. They have a lovely château. We arrived at tea-time—took hot baths—great event! Dressed, and went to the Y. hut, gave a long show—great bunch. One wonderful fellow who led the applause sings and cheers just like a cheer leader at a football game.

Until tonight I had always been very careful about what stories I told, thinking that as I was playing Y.M.C.A. huts I should not go among the Young Christians and start anything by saying “Damn” or suchlike. Tonight when I had finished my performance, having told all my expurgated editions of stories, the local chaplain stepped on the stage and said, “Boys, I’ve got some great news for you. They are going to make Henry Ford Chaplain of the American Army, because Henry Ford has shaken hell out of more people than any one man.”

After that I’ve decided to tell all my stories. If the Chaplain can get away with it, I can!



*Tuesday.*

*Angers, Hôtel du Cheval Blanc.*

Left Blois at eleven. Our driver W. was taken ill—we picked up a wild Canadian who drove us to Tours, sixty kilos in one hour. Quite a change after W., who believes in safety first.

We had lunch at Tours—and then came on to Angers. Had the doctor here. It's getting to be a habit. I don't think any of these Army doctors help me, but they certainly are good-looking. Gave a show to two thousand in an old Roman theater, which they use for anything from a prize fight to a cinema, but I felt quite at home.

*Wednesday. St. Nazaire.*

Of all the holes, this is the prize. Picked up a wonderful story that describes the place. Lots of the troops land here. One of the colored regiments, the first to come over, was stuck here for some time. One of the soldiers got enough and said if this was France and what we were fighting for, he was quite ready to stop. He went in to the doctor and said:

“Doctor, I'm feeling very bad and I think there's something the matter with my head.” The doctor beat all around the place and found nothing the matter with his head. Sam came every day, and every day the doctor told him there was nothing the matter with his head. Finally Sam said:

“Doctor, I don’t see how a man of your intelligence can talk like dat. I was a porter in a Pullman over in America. I was getting about thirty-five dollars a week, and I volunteered to come over here. Now you know there is something the matter with my head.”

I gave no show tonight. We were thoroughly worn out.

My first cousin, who is condemned to some time here, came to see us. He joined as a private and has just got his commission.

He has carefully concealed our relationship until now, but I’m afraid the beans are spilled now, as he was seen by several senior officers to meet and kiss us on the hotel steps.

However, we will hope for the best!

#### *Thursday.*

There is one attraction about this town. It is on the sea! I suppose the sea can’t pick the places it has to roll up against. We walked down to the docks—and saw Baldwin locomotives, motor trucks, automobiles and Fords being lifted out of the hold as if they were Christmas toys. It is marvelous what they do. The French stand by open-mouthed while the Yanks take a small box of what looks like junk off a ship—and after about an hour’s tinkering ride away in it—the “junk,” I mean.

I gave one show at the officers’ club in the after-

noon. Met a lot of attractive naval officers from a sea-plane station near here.

Tonight I gave two shows at two different camps. Such rain—and such mud—but such “regular guys”! Everywhere I go now the boys teach me some song. Tonight it was this—to the tune of “In My Harem”:

In the Army, the Army, the democratic Army,  
Beans for breakfast,  
Beans for dinner,  
Beans at suppertime.

Thirty dollars every month,  
We never get a dime.

In the Army, the Army, the democratic Army,  
All the Guvs and “wops”  
And the dirty Irish cops  
They’re all in the Army, too!

So they are—and that’s just what makes it *some Army!*

*Friday.*

Captain C. came for us at noon and drove us out to Le Croissic—the sea-plane station. A more charming little fishing village one could not see, and right there on the beach where the simple fisherman used to drag in his nets there are enormous hangars and enormous sea-planes inside them, with enormous bombs hanging on them, all ready to bounce on the wily sub. These fellows patrol the coast and escort the ships in and out.

I gave them a show in a very pretty little Casino. Le Croissic in the old days was quite a smart little seaside resort.

After the show we went out to watch the patrol go off. Three kids went out to protect the coast. It seemed almost impossible to believe that these mere boys who perhaps would rather be playing on the beach could be putting a foot on the lever to let fall death and destruction. They went off laughing and singing, and I found myself hoping they would not see anything, so they could keep on singing.

The fellows tell me that killing people is apt to change your voice—it gets a little more harsh—however, we came back to St. Nazaire—had dinner.

I gave one big show in the big hut in town. Two thousand. Then went on out to my cousin's crowd, where I had the honor of formally opening their new Y.M.C.A.—a lovely one. They had it all decorated with flowers and flags—a regular stage and footlights.

Afterwards the officers gave a supper for us. Captain C. told me a story which I have added to my bunch.

Two coons in jail—talking through the bars.

*Mose.* How long you in here for?

*Sam.* Oh, I'm in for twenty years.

*Mose.* Twenty years? What did you do?



*Sam.* I robbed the General's house. How long you in for?

*Mose.* Three days.

*Sam.* What did you do?

*Mose.* I killed a Sergeant.

*Sam.* How that come? I rob a house I'm in here for twenty years. You kill a man you only get three days!

*Mose.* Yes, I know, but they're going to hang me Wednesday.

*Saturday. Nantes.*

Got up at ten—went out to lunch at the Motor Transport Camp. Saw hundreds of American cars, tractors and trucks. They are all assembled here and then sent by road to the front. After lunch went out to Base Hospital No. 101. Gave a show—the first big crowd of colored soldiers I have played for. They are a great audience, and when I sang “Ragtime Strutters’ Ball” they just “whooped.” One of them came up and asked me if he could tell me a story; then he told me one that has been told to me at least ten times, so it must be good.

Two colored soldiers talking about Army Insurance. One says, “I done took ten thousand dollars’ worth of insurance.” Other says, “Good Lord! Why! You ain’t got no wife to leave it to.” “No,” replies his friend, “but you know Uncle Sam ain’t

going to send no ten thousand dollar nigger up to the front."

After the show there we left St. Nazaire without a tear, and came on to Savenay, about the largest American hospital in France. A lovely place. We dined with the nurses—and then I gave two shows, because there were too many for the "hut." Poor dears! they came in wheel-chairs and on stretchers—some pretty bad cases, but I never heard a crowd sing more wonderfully. When we left they limped and rolled out to the car, and as I sat back in it, thinking of how terrible it is that those mere "kids" should be suffering so, they were singing my version of "Over There" which I taught them in the show.

Over here—over here,  
Send a word, send a word—  
    We are here!  
And we all are working,  
You bet we're working,  
Not one is shirking,  
    Have no fear!  
Mother dear, dry that tear—  
    Soon your worries  
Will all disappear.  
We are over—we're glad we're over,  
And we won't come back till it's over  
    Over here.

We came on into Nantes—famous little old place

—and found a nice little modern hotel, with chintz-covered furniture. Our driver W. is ill again, so we are sunk, we are.

*Saumur. Sunday.*

This morning, Bill—the man who makes music for me—hustled around and borrowed another driver—a regular soldier this time, and a great character. I asked him how he liked France. He said “O.K.,” but that he knew why the French people ate so many snails—they were the only things they could catch!

We stopped at Angers and went out to the barracks, where Colonel B. put on a review of the troops for us. I stood and received the salute as they passed; they did look wonderful. Colonel B. is a West-Pointer, and a great war booster. He exudes “pep” and his men give him great satisfaction.

After the show the men were standing in line for mess. I went up with them and ate some beans with one, and *smear*—otherwise known as jam—with another; they loved it and so did I.

Came on to Saumur. Through some mistake our rooms had been given to someone else. An officer offered us his, and we took it gratefully—a small single room—and they put a cot in, which gave Mother and Elsie something to argue about for

an hour. Who should have the cot? Mother won, as usual!

There is an enormous officers' school here. I gave the show to at least fifteen hundred of them. Lots of French instructors, so I sang quite a lot of French. My translation of "I don't want to get well!" into French goes very well. Our fellows are all getting so they can speak enough French to get most anything from a toothbrush to the village belle! Saumur is where they teach officers who have been officers for five or six months how to be an *officer*!

They were a great audience, and as there were no privates there the officers did not have to behave, so we had a good old rough house—fifty-minute show!

*Monday.*

*Château de Mon Repos, Blois.*

Called up Nantes to ask if we could keep our driver another day, and received a most military "No!" So we came on here and wished ourselves on Mr. and Mrs. C. for the night. The driver went back to Nantes.

*Tuesday.*

*Crillon, Paris.*

Left Blois at eleven, driven once more by the speed king who drove us from Blois to St. Nazaire



—we made Paris with him in what seemed about a half-hour. As we entered the Porte d'Orléans Big Bertha gave one gigantic cough which shook the Packard as if it had been a rat! That one was too near to be funny, and it killed fourteen. Some people say "Bertha" is quite harmless, but then some people like rattlesnakes and Germans.

We stayed three days in Paris. Had a raid every night and "Bertha" off and on. I gave two shows for soldiers and notified my managers that I could not play in Paris for another month.

The French brought down a German raider—very satisfactory three days, except that we were cheated out of what we really came to Paris for—a hot bath. They now only allow hot water Saturday and Sunday. We arrived on Tuesday and left on Friday. Ah! yes, kind reader, fear not, I took a cold one!

*Saturday.*

*Tours, Hôtel de l'Univers.*

Not wishing to spend two weeks in Paris getting another permit to go away for one week, we came to Tours by train. Very nice hotel. The Battle of Tours is a very splendid one. The town is jammed with Bertha-dodgers. I gave a show in the "Opry House," wore a real honest-to-God evening gown, and my back was so cold that I picked up a table-cover and used it as a shawl. There were fourteen

Generals in the audience—three French, eleven American. I wanted to ask who was running the War, but I saluted instead. Wonderful crowd, and even the Generals could not hold us down.

We have hot water here every day—and hush! I had a small piece of butter tonight at dinner. Aye! verily, 'tis nice! ye Battle of Tours.

*Sunday.*

We had lunch with General A. and his aide, then started for St. Aignon, General A.'s headquarters. We stopped en route at Château Chenonceaux, one of the most lovely châteaux in France; very famous historically. One room claims to have held five queens in its time. Sounds to me as if someone had stacked the deck. Now, as is quite fitting in these days of falling crowns, the château is owned by Monsieur M., the Chocolate King. He has turned it into a most wonderful hospital for the French. We went through the wards giving cigarettes to the men. The château is built across a river. In the old days I believe the kings threw their cast-off lady friends out of the windows into the river, but today the gallant wounded men of France fish from the same windows, so Chenonceaux is a really useful place at last.

We went on to St. Aignon, where we dined with General A. and staff in the wonderful old Château

of St. Aignon. Where there are Generals in France, there must be châteaux!

It's a hard war! but before it started we Americans used to come over here and spend "heavy American dollars" to stand on the outside of one of these places, and maybe be allowed to see the stables, but now Americans are hanging their "tin lids" on some of the most royally historic hooks in France. *C'est la guerre!*

Gave a show to about three thousand, a nice rough bunch. Came back right after. The Germans are starting again around Arras.

*Monday.*

Rather a quiet day. Only four shows! Went to lunch at General K.'s château. Speaking of Generals, I now have two stars, so am a Major-General.

Went out to the aviation field after lunch and gave a show for the fellows who are not allowed in Tours. Someone has to take care of the camp, I suppose, even if there is an actress in the village. Saw lots of our fellows flying, one had a machine all red-white-and-blue stars and stripes all over it. They have a "Liberty" 'plane here also. I think they are going to send it around on a tour of camps until the others come.

Came home, had dinner and dressed at same time. Sounds acrobatic, but with the French serv-



ice in the rooms nowadays one could easily bathe between courses.

I gave two more shows in the "Opry House." One at seven and one at nine. There were no Generals tonight, so we cut loose. Afterwards we went to the opening of a new officers' club. The club was new, not the officers. I sang two or three songs, standing on the refreshment table. Picked up a good story.

"A young cadet going up for his first flight. The pilot starts looping and diving. Cadet yells, 'Hey! go easy, this is my first flight.' Pilot says, 'You've got nothing on me; it's only my second!'"

*Tuesday. Bordeaux.*

We left Tours at eleven in an open Packard, with a Dr. D., who spends his time and money trying to give our fellows pleasure. He offered to drive us down, and it was a charming trip. Stopped at Poitiers for lunch. I must say Bordeaux is too far away from action to suit me, but if these poor fellows in the camps can stand it I can.

Here we are staying with Mrs. A. and Ethel R. They run the Y.M.C.A., and they are perfectly wonderful. To see them frying eggs and dishing out pie to our boys for hours at a time, one would think it was their real profession. The boys don't know who they are. I heard one say that "the tall blonde at the Y. was some skirt"!



They have a lovely house, and it is nice to be "homey" for a day or so. The only suggestion of war being that one of these splendid American girls goes every morning at seven, and that to me is war with all its horrors. No show tonight. I feel almost like a real lady—only not too much so to spoil my enjoyment.

*Wednesday.*

My breakfast was brought in to me on a charming pre-War tray. I felt almost abandoned. We all went out to lunch on what used to be a well-known yacht—more than well-known to Mrs. A. The yacht had come in for coal. She—the yacht—is certainly one of war's stern realities. (No pun on "stern"! ) She is a very dangerous-looking greyhound of the sea, and instead of cruising about as in the old days looking for pleasure she now speeds here and there looking for trouble. It seemed to me she was purring with pleasure under the tread of feminine feet lulled by sweet memories of other days. Nice crowd of American men aboard her who looked like they might get anything they went after.

We came right ashore after lunch! Went to a big camp a few miles out tonight and gave one hour's show. I was to give another at the Colored Soldiers' Y.M.C.A., but we found out just in time that the *colored soldiers* were French Senegalese

troops, and in the midst of the show a most terrible storm came on putting out all lights. So as I don't sing Senegalese and my voice is not the kind that will stand darkness, we called off that show.

These Senegalese just look like our colored men, and they speak French. They were telling me of American colored troops arriving here. Seeing these of dusky hue working on the docks, one of ours yelled, "Hello there, Rastus! Shoot a dime?" The Senegalese looked blank and murmured, "*Je ne le comprends pas!*", whereupon our friend from Alabam yelled out, "Good Lord, here's a nigger what's been here so long he's done forgot his own talk!"

*Thursday.*

Woke up feeling so sort of luxurious that I had my hair washed. General S. has practically turned his car over to us. We went to one camp, gave a show there, came back, and I dolled up and gave another in the local Town Hall. The audience was partly French and the Mayor came around to congratulate the "*artiste.*" I think the fellows had told him that I was the Bernhardt of America. Poor man! he must find it hard to reconcile himself to my "cartwheels."

*Friday.*

Went out to an enormous artillery camp. When we arrived some colored soldiers were playing base-

ball. They had a fine jazz band. Gave a fifty-minute show.

The officers gave me a lovely bunch of flowers which they must have sent to Town for, as camps and flowers don't grow together as a rule. After the show we went on the platform outside the hut and had the band play a fox-trot. I danced with eighteen, one right after the other—my idea of a good time. One dance, eighteen partners. No monotony!

*Saturday.*

Today has been wonderful. When we arrived here, I received a pathetic letter from some engineers and wood-choppers way down in a place called Pontex, saying they had been there six months and had had no amusement, so we decided to go. We left Bordeaux at eleven in General S.'s car. It rained all day long. On the way down we saw a Canadian camp by the side of the road with a lot of the saddest-looking men I ever saw wading around in mud to their knees. We stopped and asked them if they had had a show lately. They also had had nothing for months. These poor boys are not in the firing-line, but they make it possible in many ways. Well, we said that we would stop that night on the way back. I've never heard three more lusty cheers than they gave. We went on to Pontex. The most awful road now which used to



be the famous road to Biarritz. We arrived at about five. Such a dump. Even the officers still sleeping in tents. I had a fearful grouch when I arrived, but when I saw our boys arriving, having marched ten miles from the depths of the woods, smiling, singing and cheering, I felt so glad to be able to be there, and I think I gave one of the best shows I've ever given in the middle of the village square, with just a little platform, with a tent cover over it. Rather like a Punch and Judy show. Those boys went wild, and they had nothing on me.

We had dinner in a queer little house, where the poor old lady had lost two sons and three grandsons, and was still able to smile a smile that was nothing short of heavenly. The fellows said they could last another six months on joy.

I've never been a glutton for praise, but I certainly cherish every word of it that these fine men give me. Sincerity is their middle name.

We came back and stopped at the Canadian camp. They were all in the hut waiting—such a fine crowd—mostly 1914 men who have been invalided out of their active regiments and sent down here. Most of them had seen me either in Canada, London or New York. I taught them to sing “Over Here” just as if they were Americans, and believe me, they sang it.



*Sunday. Tours.*

We left Bordeaux and our charming hostesses at about two, by train, arrived here at five. No show tonight; not because it is Sunday, but because the leading lady is *all in*. Therefore, as Mr. Pepys would say, "And so to bed and with *much* pleasure."

*Monday.*

For the next four days we are doing one-nighters around Tours, and returning to same for the night. Gave two shows today. Left Tours after lunch, and went to a tiny place called Celles-sur-Cher (pronounced by Americans now occupying the position as "Celles-sewer-Chair"!).

Dined at the General's house; he was away—probably at the War. Gave the show in the *old château*. My! how I would like to meet a young *château* for a change!

The Count and Countess who live in this aged one sent me lovely flowers from their garden. Their young son about fourteen presented them with his best "those wishing to view the body" expression, but when I thanked him in French he became the real smiling Frenchman. Funny how *English* saddens the Latin people!

From there we rode ten miles to Pont-le-Voi—I shall not tell what our boys call it—however! The show was given in what used to be Napoleon

III's *Riding School*. Tonight it held three thousand of the finest thoroughbreds ever seen. The band came up from Tours and helped me out a bit. These fellows sang a good parody on "The Long, Long Trail":

There's a long, long trail a-winding  
To No Man's Land out in France;  
Where the shrapnel shells are bursting,  
But we must advance.  
There'll be lots of drills and hiking  
Before our dreams all come true,  
But we're going to show the Kaiser  
What the Yankee boys can do.

*Tuesday.*

We found out that nineteen miles from here there is a British flying school. So our flying commanders thought it would be nice to pay them the compliment of calling, as they know we are in Tours. I said "calling" was out of my line, but that I would give them a show. So today we went out to the American flying field, had lunch at the officers' mess, and then went on over to Vendôme—the British naval flying school. It rained, so there was no flying, and all work was called off. I gave them a show at three in the most delightful miniature theater, with lights, spot-lights, all colors—a splendid orchestra, stage hung in golden-colored silk draperies, a stage manager—in fact, everything. They were a wonderful audience, and it

seemed like England again to hear them yell " 'Core! 'Core! " which sounds rather personal but really means "*Encore!*" After the show we had tea and looked around the camp. It is a garden spot, with small cottages and flowers all around them. Pansies and forget-me-nots seem to be the most popular flowers—rather nice idea for a flying school. I don't believe any of these cadets can be over seventeen—mere babies. We dined with the officers. They have a large table in the shape of a horse shoe, and all the formality of London. The best stewards of the best ships serving, each fellow has his own sugar tin, tea rations, etc. One thing which impressed me immensely was that when we were all seated the Commander quietly tapped the table and said *grace*. After dinner they gave a show for us which was as good as anything I've ever seen. They had a "girl" who was so pretty that I was ashamed to get up on the stage after her, and was very thankful that my skirts were not as short as "hers." Comparisons are odious!

"She" asked me if I had a spare evening gown, so I am going to send "her" one. They said "she" is a "*damn good little mechanic.*" They taught me their favorite song, which I love:

Good-bye-ee! Good-bye-ee!

Dry the tear, baby dear,  
From your eye-ee.

Though it's hard to part, I know,  
I'm so tickled to death to go,  
Don't cry-ee, don't sigh-ee—  
There's a silver lining in the sky-ee.  
So long, old thing,  
Cheery-oh! Chinchin!  
Na-poooh—toodle-oo—  
Good-bye-ee!

And we hated to say it.

*Wednesday.*

Left Tours after lunch in a very splendid-looking big army car, which lay right down and died on us halfway to our destination. There were no houses anywhere near us, and apparently no one wanted to go where we were going, as nothing came by. Finally, when we were just about ready to "hoof it" to the next town, a tiny speck appeared. Was it a dog running? No! Was it one of those French goats gone wild? No! And it was not a Ford. Fooled again. It was a Dodge—one of the smallest unimportant-looking Dodges I ever saw—but to us a super-Rolls-Royce. We hailed it—there were three men in it, and one of the biggest bags I ever saw. The officer in the back seat leapt out—sighs of relief, he knew me! He would take us. Well, as we were three and they were three, it was no joke for the Dodge, but she snorted and ran like mad. The Major, it turned out, was the paymaster—the man the boys write songs about!—hence the *huge satchel*. He was very nice. I sat on his lap





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(See page 60)

THERE WAS LOTS OF HOME TALENT IN "THE BIG SHOW"





most of the way, but his orderly sat on the satchel—so the boys got paid that night.

We gave two shows at a place called Gievre. It was a Y.M.C.A. General Headquarters, and when I walked onto the platform about twenty Christians, some young, some old, were sitting there. When it came to high-kicking, turning cartwheels and telling stories which the boys have taught me right in their Christian laps—I was rather nonplussed—but I must say they had all the staying powers of their martyred ancestors. When I missed one of them by about two inches he merely held out his arms—real Christian spirit.

At this place there is an American-built ice plant about half a mile long. It is almost magical, the things our men have built in so short a time. I'm sure someone has Aladdin's lamp and he certainly is working it overtime.

Two or three days later we went back to Paris after a few more shows around Tours. Before leaving there we went to a dance out at the aviation camp, given by the officers for the U.S. telephone girls who are here saving the time and temper of the A.E.F. I loved seeing them, such a nice crowd of girls, and though Tours is full of wild Frenchwomen, some famed for good looks, our boys all claim that these "hello girls" are the best-looking girls in France.

We got back to Paris in the midst of an air raid,

which I must say was rather a relief. The Battle of Tours was very nice and everything, but rather quiet.

After a few days in Paris, during which we notified my French and English managers that I could not get interested in any theater but the theater of war—at least until fall—we started for that same theater, the real American Front, known as the *Toul Sector*—and though we loved every second in France the real *fun* began when we got up where roads were camouflaged and we could hear the guns all the time—not the air raid barrage—but the big American guns that were sending real American-made hell into Germany night and day.

### THE YANK SPEAKS

Don't think, Tommy, we don't know just what you've  
    had to do,  
Believe me, kid, we realize the hell that you've been  
    through;  
When we came in, we came in strong, but one thing  
    sure is true,  
They'd have never stopped in Flanders if it hadn't been  
    for you.

We watched you fight from over there and wished that  
    we were here,  
And now that we have started we will finish, never  
    fear!



But Oh! you British Navy, it's you that helped us  
through,  
'Cause we wouldn't even be here if it hadn't been for  
you.

And everything that we do now you guys have done  
before,  
Don't think we've got the idea we came and won the  
War;  
We came to fight and fight we did, but all the time we  
knew  
We'd be practicing our German if it hadn't been for  
you.

And one thing now is certain—when they end the whole  
darn show,  
When they ring the final curtain, there is one thing  
we all know;  
They used to call us cousins and some today still do,  
But no matter what we used to be, we're brothers now  
to you!

NOTE.—This was written because so many people thought that  
Americans thought we had fought the entire War. As I knew  
that the fighting men of the A.E.F. were not boastful and  
realized thoroughly what England had done.

## CHAPTER IV

### TOUL. THE AMERICAN FRONT

**A**T last we reach the real "*Zone des Armées.*" The French won the argument about the motor pass. Had we waited we might have had permission, but I was afraid the War might end before we could convince them that my presence was really desired by our troops. I think they suspected me of having a husband up in Toul. I admit that had I one I should be very proud to have him here with such a crowd of "regular guys."

We came up by train; were met at the station by General E.'s aide, who turned out to be an old friend. We came to a little hotel called Hôtel de la Comédie—should be tragedy!

In this sector we are taken over by the Army, and very nice, too. We were informed that the General did not think I should play after such a tiring trip, so we were to dine with him quietly and discuss our line of musical attack on the Toul front. We climbed up to our palatial suite of two tiny rooms on the top floor, nice and handy for air raids. We dressed, which means that we washed our

smudgy faces, and put on our other waists, then we were whirled away in a very important-looking Army car, out to Headquarters. Toul is about seven miles back from the lines, and that's much too far from things for this fighting General, so he has a château out at a place called Bouc—looks rather like it sounds, but I must say the General has a good front-row seat for the fight. He can walk out on a sort of terrace and see two or three German sausage observation balloons any time things get dull. Very nice, but I could not help wondering if their eyesight was as good as the General's!

They have just had a "show" up here and the General showed us on the war-map what our boys have done. The French have decorated them all. *Croix de Guerre* are as thick as "cooties," no thicker than that, because up here they don't give the elusive "cootie" a chance to say "Kamarad"; they have what they call "delousing stations" and it is quite against orders for anyone to harbor a "cootie." A delousing station is a very nice-looking place. You go in one side with full equipment, including "cooties," field mice, and other souvenirs of war, and you come out the other side with nothing left but your reputation, and not too much of that. It means about two days' rest, though, so it's getting rather popular. They tell me that up in the front line one fellow offered to trade his Ger-

man Iron Cross, pinched from a dead-ed Hun, for a nice live "cootie" which would prove as a free pass back to the local Turkish bath! Enough of "cooties," dead Germans and other such—!

We dined with General E. and staff, a charming lot of men. The General has issued a regular Army Order that I am to be in "the order of the day." I feel very important. He also gave me a red motor pass to the forward areas. We heard the booming of the guns all through dinner and then someone remarked that there was a little show on, so we went out on the terrace and were introduced to star shells, Very lights, one-fifty fires, and so on. What a wonderful sight! A glorified Fourth of July, the kind every kid dreams of having. Red lights—green—what a nasty idea a Very light is—the man who invented it must have been the kind who motored through the parks turning his searchlight on the loving couples.

The constant cannonade was awe-inspiring. I don't understand how they get the gunners to keep it up all night. We came home about nine-thirty. Captain S. brought us in. When we arrived in front of the hotel I heard an aeroplane, so I said, "Isn't he out rather late?" Captain S. looked at his watch and said, "That's a Britisher. In about twenty minutes you will hear about thirty of them. The British airmen go over to bomb Germany every night."



I tried not to hang my mouth open in sheer wonderment, but when I got upstairs about ten minutes later I found it still open.

At about ten we were all ready to call it a day and turn in, when suddenly the *air* started to buzz and throb. We slipped on coats, switched off lights, and stepped out onto the little balcony, and sure enough, there they were—just like so many taxicabs, with lights on their wings and tails, running opposition to the stars. They were so loaded with nice juicy bombs for Metz, Coblenz and others that they really groaned under the weight. One by one they disappeared into the night, wagging their tail-lights behind them.

There seemed to be a mother and father aeroplane who sort of showed them the way, and they did not go, for we could hear them buzzing around. Mother and I pinched each other to be sure it was not a dream. Such courage. I can imagine going up all right, but think of coming down in the dark!

We went to bed, but not to sleep. We could still hear mother and father up there. Why? we asked. But we were soon answered. At about ten-thirty-five, the chickens started to come home to roost. We leapt out again onto the balcony. This time they were not groaning, they were singing and, having dropped their bits of "hail," came running home like bad children. Now we understood why mother and father were there. Far across the sky towards

Bocheland two tiny lights appear. The engine sings a little louder. Nearer it comes, then up on one side mother lights her eyes. And says, "Come this way, child." On the other side, father says, "Well done, child! Go to bed."

We could not count them going out, as they were apparently in formation, but coming home we distinctly counted twenty-four, and we both said a little prayer and hoped a little hope that only twenty-four had gone out that night.

*From diary. Wednesday.*

I think Toul must have given up the idea of sleep for the duration of the War. Toul can certainly afford to, as it has been sleeping soundly for hundreds of years.

The "Archies" (anti-aircraft guns) woke me this morning. A snoopy, but rather nervy Hun came over, supposedly to take pictures; personally, I think to find out where the concert was going to be, because in the midst of same this afternoon along came a Boche, sailed around over us and went home. Rather rude, I thought, even for a German. After all, I can't help it if I don't sing Wagner and if I had he would have gone even sooner.

Gave my afternoon show up back of the lines in what is called a *rest camp*. I imagine it is so called because the mud is so deep that if you once step in it you *rest there*. The fellows had just come out of

the line. The show was out of doors—the stage two tables “wished” together. The boys seemed rather shocked to see me at first. I don’t wear a uniform, and I’m the only girl I’ve met who does not. They were fine, though. They gave me souvenirs they had picked up, pins, medals, German coins, etc.

When I finished I asked if they had any home talent, so a nice-looking boy got up and sang a parody which he had written on “The Sunshine of Your Smile,” as follows:

This is some life we’re leading, me and you;  
But cheer up, old pal! this War must near be through.  
We from the States must fight, yes, man to man,  
Till Peace reigns in Europe and the U.S.A. so *grand*,  
Then give us a boat or anything that floats,  
Volunteers or draft  
We’ll take chances on a raft;  
Give us the chance, you’ll find that we won’t stall  
As long as it gets back to the best land of them all.

Bless their hearts! They are all cheery, and ready to do all they can. They like France, but they love America, and the slogan up here is “Heaven, Hell or Hoboken by Christmas!”

We came back to the hotel to dinner. If you could call it that. Napoleon said an army travels on its stomach. Well, I’m glad the Army is not stopping in this hotel. They would never make the front-line trenches, let alone Germany!



Tonight went out to another crowd who were just going into the line. The band met me, and what a band! They marched ahead of us playing "Over There." Gave the show on a platform built up against the local Plaza, which was one story high with a big shell-hole in the roof, making a perfect ventilating system. A Boche 'plane came over and the boys yelled, "Come on down, you poor boob, and see a good show!" They were very excited about going into the line and all asked what I wanted them to bring back. I said, "Yourselves, please."

After the show I took the drum-major's stick and led the band down the road. Got so excited that I forgot we must turn off for the road to Toul and walked about a quarter of a mile too far, then I didn't know how to stop them. So I held the baton up over my head, and sure enough they stopped like one man. I never could understand people following a band through the streets, but I certainly know the fascination of leading one now.

*Thursday.*

We rode over to Nancy to lunch. Poor old Nancy! The Huns have certainly picked on her. I couldn't help saying "I knew her when——!!"

The hotel that we stopped at when motoring through this country before the War just isn't any more. They bomb Nancy 'most every night, and



still these brave people "carry on." It is wonderful. We came back, went out to Bouc, where I gave my show in the village square in a prize-fight ring they had last week for a fight. Had an enormous crowd on all four sides which made it rather difficult. I asked them to please close in on three sides, for though I knew the back was the best part of a goose I was rather scared of an attack from the rear!

The General came and stood among his men, refusing to sit down while the men could not. I suppose he figured if the men could *stand for the show*, he could! He made a charming little speech of thanks to me and as he left the men cheered until he was out of sight. Then I had Bill play a fox-trot and invited the boys to dance with me. They leapt into the ring, and no matter who fought in that ring last week, I know their staying powers were no better than mine. I danced with eleven in the broiling sun. All privates, and *some* dancers, believe me!

Gave another show at seven at Minet-le-Tour (called *Minnie Letourrrr* by us!). Nice girl, but we had very bad weather. Wind blowing, a little rain now and then, and another prize-fight ring. I admit that I have a weakness for prize-fights—but I prefer a stage without ropes around it. In the first place I am quite sure on my feet and so far have not been knocked out. The ring was right on the

main road, and when ammunition trains were not snarling by going up to the front, the local church bell was ringing out in protest. "Poor Minne Letourrrr! Look at her now and before the Yanks came!" Last week prize-fighters and this week an actress! No wonder the church bell rang!

Despite all the opposition I succeeded in giving about a forty-minute show. The boys were in the trees, up poles, on fences, in fact everywhere. As a finish I led the band and danced. When I turned my back on one bunch, which I could not avoid doing in the ring, they would moan and groan, so I felt rather like the revolving stage at the Century Theater, trying to face them all and only having one face!

It was very muddy and damp, so two big M.P.'s (M.P. is the man who tells the A.E.F. how not to behave) carried me to the car, which took us on over to a flying field where another bunch were waiting for us. This time indoors, and quite a relief. Splendid stage, candle footlights, and flags hanging at the back. All this was in an enormous aeroplane hangar. There was such an echo that my voice came back and hit me in the face, but we had a great time.

Colonel M., the boss of flying in these parts, made a very nice speech and then we went over to the 94th Squadron Headquarters and met all our American "birds." Two very young and very nice-looking

flyers who have the honor of bringing a nice live Boche with aeroplane down right in the heart of Toul. The Toulites declared a holiday and spent it kissing and cheering the two young heroes. They were both decorated, but really they don't need any decoration. Nature beat the French General to it, I think.

We had a sing-song at the piano and then we came home firmly convinced that heroes are very nice. The commander of the squadron looked about eighteen, and is in reality an old gent of twenty-three. He had at least six decorations. He looked so young I thought he must have won them at baby shows, but no! he is a wonderful "Boche buster," and though an American joined the French Army as a simple *poilu* in 1914. Oh! this is a great War!

P.S. Tragic note. The baby "Boche buster" is married!!!!

*Friday.*

There is one glorious thing about having a naturally comic singing voice—you don't miss it when it is gone!

Minnie Letourrr and her church bells did my near alto in yesterday. I could hardly talk when I woke up, but seeing a couple of thousand dough-boys all smiling at you at once would make a dumb man speak, so it came back in the afternoon.



We lunched with General A., boss of artillery, on the lawn at his château. (Some day I know I will find a General who has only a house!) It was lovely. His staff also lunched with us and his band played during "eats." They played the music of all my shows and I went down to thank them, and found that the band leader had been in the orchestra at the Colonial Theater, Boston, where I have played a considerable portion of my career. He gave me his baton and I led his band. I think I shall have to keep a private band after the war—it's becoming a habit.

From there we went to Rangeval, where the stage was built in an old brickyard. I had only started when it began to rain some of the wettest rain I've ever met; no cover to the stage, of course, and as I had on my best and only suit, I got rather "panicky," so we stopped long enough for me to give the order for the boys to "take cover" under their slickers (raincoats) and borrow one of them for myself, also an overseas cap from another boy, a bit of canvas for Bill and the aged piano, and—then we "carried on."

The rain never even stopped or hesitated. I was rather glad that my complexion is "a poor thing but mine own" and that my eyelashes don't wash off. Those boys were too wonderful. They sat in puddles, but their enthusiasm was the kind that rain could not dampen. We had tea afterwards in



the nice warm kitchen of an old monastery; a sweet little Frenchwoman insisted on my warming my soaked self by the fire. I did, and then sang for her "Joan of Arc" in French. She wept bitterly—not at my singing, but because she had lost her "man" in the War. She showed us his picture and we wept with her.

The boys came trooping in. I sniffed guiltily and murmured something about catching cold.

She poured tea for those Yanks with smiling eyes and not a tear visible. I guess she has her tears well under control by now, as her man went away in 1915.

From there we went on to Royamieux, where we dined in a sort of underground mess. I am sure that after the War all these men who have got used to descending and dining under shell-fire will hang about the Knickerbocker Grill and the Biltmore "baths" just because *they are underground*. Even the subway will become more popular!

After dinner we went to the hut—the show was to be indoors—and I was delighted at the prospect until I got in, and found that there were just as many fellows outside as there were in, and a riot just about to take place. They were hanging on rafters on the roof, in fact everywhere, and it's rather hard to do your best to the accompaniment of such phrases as "Get off my neck, you big

stiff," "Take your foot off my hip, you boob," and added to this the very tiny stage was absolutely littered with French children—all sizes and each one possessing the same spirit that stopped the Huns on the Marne, only in this battle they were attacking. They had decided to see the show, and see it they did! Finally I realized that the party was getting rough, so I called a halt, and told all the outsiders and the rafter-hangers that if they would run away and play for a while I would give another show immediately after the one I was trying to give. I did so and had another riot trying to get the house emptied after the first show! Well, it was a great night, and I wish the Germans could have seen the attack on that Y.M.C.A. hut. They would inhale their own poison gas and die, all in one piece at least—because if the Yanks "attack" something they like in such style, what would they do to Germans!?

*Saturday.*

We went out to the aviation field for lunch. I must say the flyer's life may be the shortest, but it certainly is the sweetest. They live well, have regular beds—it reminded me rather of a boys' school. After lunch they all go down to a sort of club-room on the field where they wait for an "*alerte*"—which means Germans crossing the lines. At a certain time they go out and patrol, or rather look

for trouble. It is lovely to hear them talking just like they had been out duck shooting.

Conversation at lunch:

*First Flyer.* Where were you when I dove on his tail?

*Second Flyer.* I was lying up there on a cloud and just getting ready to go when I found a Fokker right under my nose.

*First Flyer.* Did you bite him?

*Second Flyer.* Well, if I didn't, I fixed him so he won't bite anyone else.

All this without any idea of bragging—just two good young sportsmen talking about the day's "bag."

After lunch went out towards the Front, and there in among the hills was the most lovely natural theater—three small hills and a little stage down in the heart of them. The fellows were spread all over the hills and in the trees. The sun made a most perfect spotlight. They presented me with flowers from the Curé's garden. I felt rather as if I was robbing some poor dear boy who has gone, as the Curé takes care of the little cemetery on the other side of one of the hills, but the boys were very proud of having flowers for me, so I thanked them and told them that Thorley never sent anything as nice. Went on and gave another show to some isolated gunners, then came back to Toul and became very social for the evening!



Having had a very charming invitation from General P. commanding 32nd French Division, we went to dine at his house. We had thought of course there would be Americans there, but we were ushered into a room where fourteen charming Frenchmen of all ages and ranks waited for us. One out of the fourteen spoke English; he was the General's aide, and one of the best-looking men I've ever seen. As Mother only speaks a little French she drew this prize beauty—while I sat between "*mon colonel et mon commandant*," with *mon Général* directly *en face*. The table was marvelous. He had had special flags made by the wounded *poilus*; menus also painted by them—lovely bunches of poppies, cornflowers and marguerites, making the natural Red, White and Blue. It was altogether the most wonderful dinner I ever saw, and that's all I did do—see it! Imagine thirteen charming Frenchmen all asking me questions at once! Even I, who flatter myself on being fairly speedy with the eating weapons, never succeeded raising one any further than about a level with my wish-bone.

They were all most enthusiastic in their praise of our men. In fact, General P. is the one who personally decorated an entire Massachusetts regiment. I should have loved to see the dear old General kissing our fellows on both cheeks as he decorated them. He remarked about my collection



of stars, which now numbers four. I am not sure he did not think I was Mrs. Pershing herself, but anyway he said I must have one of his stars, and that was much more to me than *dinner*.

By the time dessert was reached I decided to grab some soufflé or die in the General's house and embarrass him, so I saw my chance. You see, the whole thirteen worked in relays. One would ask a question, then he would eat while his neighbor carried on. Finally it came to *mon colonel's* turn, just as the soufflé arrived. He gave me my chance—by asking what kind of a man President Wilson was personally. I answered that I had not the honor of knowing him and fell into the soufflé as they all tried to figure out why a lady who could wear four generals' stars and travel in the war zone in a military motor did not know the President. I just let them figure it out while I made the soufflé do an Enoch Arden! Though I write of this flip-pantly, because it is my custom to write thusly—Mother and I were really very proud, and my only worry is that dear General P. thought we were much more important than we really are. However, all fourteen have promised to come to see me when I play in Paris, and then they will know the worst!

*Sunday.*

Today is a red-letter day for me. I have myself

personally killed a German and maybe three or four. At nine this morning we went with General A. up to the woods right back of the lines where the big guns nestle in sweet seclusion. We got out of the motor at the place where motors no longer are possible, and got onto the cutest little narrow-gauge railroad, on a little car that usually carries shells, and this morning drew a couple of "duds"—only a couple, because the General is a regular first-class "high explosive" in the artillery end of the war game. We rode through the loveliest green woods, going like mad (the narrow-gauge has anything at Coney Island beaten by miles!). We passed many big guns, all camouflaged by natural trees, and finally arrived at a battery of one hundred and fifty-fives. The General gave the word and the show commenced. Boom! went one on our left some distance away. Boom! on the right, a little nearer, then the gunners where we were stood to attention—"Battery ready! Fire!" came the order. They gave me some cotton for my ears, but I was afraid of missing something. Boom! she went—and jumped back like a spirited horse—"Always the same!" came the order.

"Now, Miss Janis, kill a few Huns," said the General.

I took the little piece of cord which is called the *laignon*, and thrilling as I have never thrilled before, I stood to attention and waited for my orders.

“Battery ready! Fire!” said the General, and I *pulled*. I was so excited I forgot to jump. “Always the same!” came the command, and I pulled again. I would be there still pulling only for the fact that the observation posts reported that there was nothing left of the position we had been shelling, and as it is a very expensive war I desisted and came away regretfully, but very proud. They told me I was the only woman who had fired regular hundred and fifty-five power hate into Germany.

We started home, but as I had heard so much about a place called Beaumont, better known as Dead Man’s Curve, I asked the General if we could not drive around said curve. He said it was very dangerous, but that if we wanted to take the chance he would. So we said “Hear! hear!” and started. When we got up near the curve we were stopped by an M.P. and told to put on our gas masks. We did so for a few moments, but I decided I would just as leave argue with the gas itself as be smothered to death, so we hung them around our necks.

As we approached Beaumont, going through the remains of little French villages, we saw lots of our boys who were just having lunch. When they saw us they dropped their food in astonishment. I hung out of the car and yelled at them. We got up near the curve—a sign greeted us: “*Attention!*”



*l'ennemie vous voit!*" (Look out! the enemy can see you!). I made the ugliest face I could, hoping that it was true. We approached the curve—shell holes big enough for a house to rest in on all sides of us. We waited breathlessly for Fritz to "strafe" us, but as it was lunch time he was evidently otherwise occupied. Nothing happened—in the way of excitement—except among the boys who were up there. They seemed overjoyed and cheered us as we passed.

We came back to lunch with General E. and I had lots of fun kidding about that terrible place called Dead Man's Curve. I said I had seen birds' nests in some of the shell holes and pollywogs in others, and that it was only a rumor about Fritz shelling it. He was not at all pleased at our having gone up, and informed me Fritz had been picking on it all morning. I am glad we went at lunch time.

After lunch I was feeling so important on account of my morning's work that I had to convince myself that I was really there to entertain the boys, and not to strafe Huns. Gave a show at three for the ammunition trains fellows. I think they are exceedingly brave to go bumping along sitting on enough high explosives to blow up the Flatiron Building, and all the time under direct fire with no method of getting even. Had tea at a town called Lucy. I would like to know what all these girls



had to do to have towns named after them! Went on to another place, Lagny, at seven.

This crowd were just out of trenches and between the joy of still being alive and the excitement of seeing a girl from home they very nearly went mad. I thought the French inhabitants of Lagny looked rather scared. Perhaps they thought the Yanks might decide to throw the village houses in the air as they did their overseas caps. We went back to Lucy to dine with the ammunition train crowd. They gave a show for us. Their little French liaison officer sang the French "Tipperary"—"Madelon"! We left them at about ten. They work at night, so their day was beginning.

We came home by the most wonderful moonlight, as bright as day. There was a terrific cannonade going on, which seemed all wrong, according to my ideas of moonlight. I said "What a wonderful night!" and then suddenly realized that the ammunition train would get it hot and heavy. So I sat back and hoped for rain.

I shall hate leaving this sector. Everyone has been so nice, and I know I shall not have another manager like Captain F. who has been piloting us about. My "chief of staff" they all call him. In fact they had a big sign made for the motor—"Elsie Janis Division. Captain A. F., Chief of Staff." I wish it was my division.

We got home at midnight. There is a big

“show ” going on up front. They say our guns are making most of the row. Oh! gee! I wish I was *pulling the string!*

*Monday.*

We were to leave this morning, but the General sent word that there were thirty wounded from last night's raid out at the hospital, all fellows that I had sung for, and he thought they might like to see me. We went to lunch first up in the woods with the observation balloon crowd—very near the line and a *strafe* going on all through lunch. Very soon I shall write a new version to an old song—Gee! but I like shell-fire with my meals.

Afterwards went to the hospital, gave one show for the fellows who could move about in the “hut,” then went through the wards to see the boys from last night's raid. Poor kids! they had just gone in and were settling down when the Huns put on a gas show and got some of them quite badly, but they tell me that seventy dead Germans were counted—hanging on the barbed wire at dawn to-day, so that's not so bad for beginners.

In one of the wards I found a Major who has been one of the fellows to boss the big gun that is named after me. There are two of them, big railway guns—one is “Betsy Ross” and the other “Elsie Janis.” I am certainly proud, for he says we were chosen as being American patriots. I don't know that Betsy

Ross would like it, but I feel quite overcome by being mentioned with her.

He told me that Elsie had just finished making a mess of a position when he got "his." He says she is some girl and has her name in large white letters written on her graceful but somewhat hard face.

Saw one dear kid who was terribly bunged up. He had gone out to rescue two of his pals who were wounded and got them nearly in when they got him. Also saw two little German boys both shot through the spine and paralyzed from the hips down. One is seventeen and looks like a girl. They are lying in the position one would like to see all the Huns in—on their backs, with both legs well in the air and about fifty different ropes and weights tied to them.

When we went in they turned their heads away. I suppose they thought we had come to sneer at them, but somehow one does not sneer. A wounded man is a wounded man. I spoke to them in German, and they smiled. The pretty one showed me how he could "*die Füße bewegen*" and told me he was glad he was out of the battles.

They tell a story up here of a young German boy whom they took prisoner; he spoke English, and one of our fellows asked him how he thought the War would end. He thought a while, and then said:

“Well, we ought to win because we have God with us, but now that the Allies have America—*ich weiss nicht!*”

Tomorrow we leave, and I am sorry. This has been a wonderful week! And so, as the Huns say, “*Nach Paris*”—only we will get there and they never will!



## CHAPTER V

### NEUILLY AND OUR BOYS

**M**Y experience of the next three weeks might have been considered by some people terribly sad, but to me it was very inspiring—we got back to Paris and learned that some two thousand wounded Americans had arrived at Neuilly, the American hospital. We were only supposed to stay in Paris three or four days, but I got into the hospital work and found myself more useful than I ever dreamed was possible.

As soon as we heard of our heroes arriving, I called up the Red Cross and asked if they thought I might be of any use out at the hospital. They were very courteous, but not too enthusiastic, for if they had ever seen me in action singing “Over Here” and urging our boys to go get the Germans, they probably thought I would be rather too strenuous for a ward full of very badly wounded men—as these boys all came from fighting which was taking place all too near to Paris—then came direct from the field dressing stations to Neuilly.

Well, the Red Cross said they thought I might take some cigarettes, flowers, chewing gum, etc.,

out to the boys; they did not say so, but I am sure they did not care about taking the responsibility of what might happen if I sang to the poor dears.

However, *we went*—Mother took all the things people take to the wounded—and I took the broadest grin I could produce—a grin which at first was not quite understood by the nurses, but they got used to it in time.

They were so crowded at the hospital that our poor boys were lying in the halls, and in fact all over the place.

I did not think to put on a hospital face, which is that sort of “My poor boy, where were you wounded?” expression, and I’m afraid I was perhaps a bit *dressy*. I remember thinking I was looking quite well. So when I bounded up to some very busy nurses, and said I wanted to work in the wards I don’t think they quite understood my idea of “working” in a ward. Luckily the first nurse who listened to my plea stuck her head in the door of a ward which was filled with boys who had sung with me and laughed with me a month before “somewhere up front,” and when she said, “Boys, would you like to see Miss Elsie Janis?” she was answered by a mixture of yells that I am sure were never heard before in a hospital. Of course my eyes filled with tears of genuine pride. You see, it was a crucial moment for me, for if they had not done that, my hospital career

might have ended then and there, and oh! what a lot of real joy I would have missed.

I did not stop to look at the nurse's expression, but I'm sure she thought I was the paymaster of the Army.

We went in. They all said, "Hello, Elsie, and hello, Mother!"

There was not a man there who did not have one or two limbs in the air, all hung up on what I called gymnasium stuff, with that marvelous drainage system of the more marvelous Dr. Carrel which has saved hundreds of lives in this War.

We laughed and even sang. I told them all my new stories and sang anything they asked for, and felt really *useful* to humanity for the first time in my life.

When we came out, the word had gone around that we were there and there was a bevy of nurses saying, "Oh, Miss Janis, do come into my ward, the boys know you and are asking for you."

That first day I went into seven wards and found more *dear* friends than I ever hoped to have. It would be foolish to say that it was not the most difficult work I ever did because it's rather hard to go in and be funny when your heart is aching at the thought of so many wonderful men all maimed, suffering, and some dying. I am not very sympathetic and would run a mile rather than see *blood*—but there were so many splendid women there to sym-



pathize that I was not needed for that; so while Mother, who is a past mistress in that art, held boys' heads while they had their wounds dressed, I went in other wards and tried to make them forget that they had wounds. I could write pages of the bravery of our men, not under fire because that goes without saying, but under real and terrible pain. Whether they had lost one leg or two, whether they would perhaps never see again, the smile was always there for me and my little jokes. I used to start by saying when I entered a ward, "Is there anyone in great pain here, because if there is I won't sing, as I don't want them to blame it on my voice," and in the three weeks that I worked there every day, I never had one of them admit that he was in "great pain." I shall try to write briefly some of the little sayings of the boys, but before I do I want to say that I thought I had seen badly wounded men during my hospital work before, but I have never seen boys "shot to pieces" like those boys were. They had been really almost too brave.

I said to one boy who was so swathed in bandages that all I could see was one very nice blue eye and the corner of one very strong American mouth, "Well, old dear, you certainly got yours, didn't you?" He said, "Yes, I did, but the last time I seen the Germans they was running up a hill."

I went into a ward where a poor fellow was just



coming out of ether. A very good-looking Irishman. He came to sufficiently to hear me start one of my best stories in this fashion: "An Irishman was taken prisoner by the Germans——" At that he sat bolt upright in bed and, glaring at me, said: "That's a blankety-blank-blank lie. No Irishman was ever taken prisoner by those blankety-blank Germans." I won't say I have never heard such language, but it certainly was not what I call polite hospital chatter. Of course the other fellows all yelled at him to shut up, and I started again—in fact I started four times—but he won. So I changed and told one on an English Tommy, which soothed him, he being an Irishman.

Certainly variety is the spice of the American Army. I found every nationality and lots of them not speaking English. How they ever understood commands I can't fathom, but one thing was obvious—they did not need to be told to *advance*, and *retreat* is a word unknown.

One day I found an Italian trying to make his nurse understand that he wanted an orange. I have always wondered why I took up that language; I thought it was because of a handsome dark-eyed Latin I had met and could not talk to—but now I know it was to talk to that dying boy, Tony, that I spent hours saying "*Io saro—tu sarai—egli sara—noi saremo*, etc." I got the orange for him and we became such good friends that when a day

came and the nurse told me that Tony had gone to a land of eternal Italian blue skies, I shirked my duty and did not sing any more that day.

Of course the wonderful part of it all is that for one Tony who can't go on with the struggle, twenty Jacks, Dicks and Bills get well and come home to hold their families spellbound by tales of when they were at Château-Thierry, and so on. More wonderful still the contempt of the strong for the weak. I went into one of my favorite wards one lovely sunny day. The boys were all smiling, but over in one corner was a bed with a screen around it which meant that one of our brave boys was "going west." I said "Hello!" and then told the boys that I would not sing to them that day on account of the boy with the screen. They grumbled a bit and I left; the next day when I went the screen was gone and I was greeted with yells of delight. I'm sure they were sorry he was gone, but to them, in their youth and enthusiasm, death is only part of the game—so we carried on!

In that same ward one of the boys had lost his left leg—and while I was singing he kept laughing quietly to himself. So I said, "I know my voice is funny, but I don't think it's very 'matey' of you to laugh like that." He said, very apologetically, "I'm so sorry, Miss Janis, but my foot that's gone tickles so and I can't scratch it. Do forgive me."

In two weeks he was flying around the place on

crutches flirting with all the pretty nurses and very cheery because he had tried on his new leg and it was a wonder.

Another boy had lost an eye and had a patch over it. I asked if he was going to get a new eye. He said he was waiting until he could get a bloodshot one to match his regular "lamp."

There were lots of French wounded in the hospital and they are just like little children. Our boys take everything for granted, and ask for what they want if you don't happen to have it, which is of course very American, but to the French a "Good-morning" spoken in their native tongue is enough to make them nearly weep for joy. I used to sing them our popular American songs which I had translated into French. The favorite was "I don't want to get well" which I am going to write down in case anyone would like to try it on their Berlitz Method. *Voilà!*

Je ne veux pas guérir,  
Je ne veux pas guérir,  
Car j'adore ma jolie infirmière.  
Chaque matin, chaque midi et chaque soir,  
Elle m'apporte ma médecine et un peu d'espoir.  
Je ne veux pas guérir,  
Je ne veux pas guérir,  
Heureusement que je suis célibataire.  
Le docteur dit il crains pour ma condition.  
Mais, grâce à Dieu,



J'ai encore de l'ambition.  
Je ne veux pas guérir,  
Je ne veux pas guérir,  
Car j'adore ma jolie infirmière.

The French boys all learned it, and as soon as I would enter their ward would start to sing it in chorus. One of the most amusing sights in a hospital in France is to see regular "roughneck" Americans sitting up in bed, making baskets, knitting, and even doing embroidery to pass the time away.

There was a very dressy and serious-minded nurse in one ward who rather resented my existence. I didn't know of hers until one day when I went in, and over in a corner was one boy in great pain. I started leaping about as usual and she came up to me saying, "Do be a little careful; poor John (pointing to the sufferer) is in great pain, and you might jar him." Whereupon said John lifted his aching head and spoke as follows: "Aw! leave her alone—she is the first real live thing I've seen since I hit this joint—go to it, Elsie"—and I went to it. Exit Queen Nurse, peevishly.

The boys asked me to sing everything from "Annie Laurie" to the "Strutters' Ball," and fortunately having a good memory I could usually make good, but one day I was very nearly sunk. A very good-looking boy from New Orleans who was very badly wounded asked me if I could sing "Poor But-



terfly." I never had sung the song in my life, and I venture to say I stand alone in that. So I tried to put him off by saying it was a very sad song, and he said it meant so much to him.

Memories of home. So I told the other fellows to be brave, and I started, not knowing what I was going to sing. It was as if an angel from Heaven had prompted me, for the words came that I never realized I knew. He was very grateful and smiled. Twenty minutes later as I was leaving he had his nurse lift him up and he waved feebly and said, "Good-by, poor Butterfly!" An hour later he "went west," and I am still thanking that angel who made it possible for me to grant his request.

To the American soldier, a shave is one of the most important orders of the day—and in the hospital it's rather difficult with hundreds of them wanting the same thing at once. So Mother got some safety razors and gave one to each ward. In my palmiest days as the only girl amusing hundreds of soldiers, I was never more popular than any one of those razors. The boys absolutely fought for them, and it was too sweet to see how they would doll up, as they expressed it, before I came; in fact the only real grumbling I ever heard was not from the fellow with an arm, leg or eye gone, but from the one with a three or four days' growth of beard—and among the very badly wounded the only plea was, Will I be able to get back and get

even? Those three weeks were about the happiest of my life. I got to know the boys so well—made many real friends and lost a few. It got so the boys would promise the nurses not to make a fuss when they had their wounds dressed if she would promise to bring Elsie in.

I sang sometimes in as many as fifteen wards in a day. I usually had a good cry when I got home, but my reward was in the fact that the boys wanted me—and it was with rather a heavy heart that I left them to go back to the Front—for it was rather uphill work spurring our boys on after I had seen the results of a victorious battle.

All the time I had been going to Neuilly the Y.M.C.A. had been trying to get a motor pass for us, and without much success as it turned out—but finally they came and said that everything was in order and we were to start for Chaumont. We were very pleased and we started—but we did not finish! We left Paris after a very good lunch, on what seemed to be a lovely spring day, but turned out to be very muddy. They gave us our identification books, which we never thought of examining, and explained that Frank our driver could not drive because he had no permit, but he was to go along and take the car over once we were safely out of Paris. We were in a Renault—driven by a rather ancient Frenchman, who had all that was needed in the way of passes, etc., with Frank seated

beside him, all ready to leap into the driver's seat when the All Clear signal was given. Mother, Bill the music man, and myself were seated comfortably in the limousine trying to forgive it for having no springs. We had been told it was the car that E. H. Sothern had used, so we told ourselves that if he could stand the bumps we could. We got lost going out of Paris—a thing we had never yet failed to do, either going out or coming in, but we finally got under way and it looked like Chaumont for a late dinner. Alas! it only looked like it, and it turned out that we were all wearing rose-colored glasses.

At tea time we eased into a town called Provins—how should we know that said Provins was the *Quartier Général Militaire*?! There were at least four other roads to Chaumont—but we went via Provins. I was sitting well back in my corner quite at peace with the world, when all at once I saw a barrier rather like those Pennsylvania toll-gates—across the road—and a very warlike person with tin hat, bayonet fixed, and all the other props of war who held up a very firm brown hand and we stopped. I tried to look as if it meant nothing in my life, and sat even further back in my corner—trying not to look like a woman . . . it being “*défendu*” to be a woman and in an automobile at the same time.

He examined the French driver's papers, and



said "*Bien!*" We sighed sighs of relief in three different keys and prepared to move on, but no! he came to the door and said in the sweetest of French tones: "And these ladies——???! Their papers."

"Oh yes, certainly," said I, while Mother fumbled in her bag for them. I tried to make conversation with the gentleman, but his eyes were on Mother's bag. Even then I was quite calm.

Out came the *Carnet d'étranger*—little red-books—that look like nothing, but really keep you from spending most of your spare time in jail.

Mother handed them out with a sort of "Poor snoopy boob" expression, and we all sat back. He looked at them and said: "Ah! just as I thought."

About this time I began to think about how much I really loved Paris, so I said, "If everything is not in order we will go back to Paris."

"Ah, no, madam," said the warlike one, "that you cannot do. You must come to Headquarters right now—you are found traveling in a motor without permission and are liable to arrest." I said, "But our books are in order," and then the blow fell. "Decidedly not," he said. "*Regardez!*"

I looked at the books and saw "*Ces dames sont permis d'aller jusque Chaumont par chemin de fer ou à pied.*" (These ladies are permitted to go as far as Chaumont by railroad or on foot.)

A nice little eighty-mile walk appealed to me



strongly at that moment. Well, there was no argument. The Young Christians had thought they could put something over on the French authorities—but they will have to sit up all night let alone get up early before that happens.

We went to the “*gare*,” where a crowd of villagers gathered around us. I must say I never felt more dangerously important. I began to feel like the spy who was condemned to be shot at sunrise and said, “But I never get up till ten.”

After waiting about half an hour, while the French driver went in to explain things, in his own sweet way, by saying that he knew nothing about us, he had been ordered to drive us to Chaumont and he was doing it, he finally came back with what we gleaned was the Boss of Provins. He had one of those French ostermoor face-fittings that are only used in America to get a laugh when the show is dragging, but in France are used in the best families. I think to hide the neckties that the wife gives them for Christmas; but above the edge were shining two of the most snappishly human blue eyes mine ever met. Hope revived! So I took the center of the stage—he was quite firmly charming, and informed me that the driver and the car were to go to Chaumont—the two gentlemen could go to Chaumont by train—as their passes read—or return to Paris—but the ladies were to—return to Paris *at once*. The train would leave in two hours

and that the ladies were very lucky to be allowed to go, as they really should go to the local *Sing Sing*. It was decided that all the culprits would return to Paris, but in the meantime the French would certainly have to answer to the U. S. Army, two thousand of which were waiting in Chaumont to be sung to by the "super spy," Mlle. Elsie Janis! It was all very funny, but on the other hand rather tragic. We had eight bags, rugs, cushions and other "spy-like" props. The French driver was made to put them all out as if they had the measles and beat it to Chaumont.

By this time the villagers were all but taking our coat buttons for souvenirs. We were shown a little hostel across the way by the bearded blue-eyed wonder, where we could dine. We did and ate some nice well-meaning *horse*, camouflaged as a steak. When it came near train time the police came for us and we were escorted to the comic train by them, put into a carriage, our bags piled in on top of us and handed our various papers. On every one was written "Found in an automobile without permission" and everything else on them canceled. I made a speech from the carriage door to the Boss of Provins and all his staff, telling them that I did not blame them but that inside of two weeks we would come back to Provins with a blue *passe*—just to prove we had not been shot at sunrise or any other time. We pulled out and left them standing with

“What a pity—so young and yet so false” expression lurking under their beards and to add insult to injury they all yelled “*Bonne chance!*”

I suppose they meant they hoped death would be instantaneous. I’ve never met such a weak-minded train. Its idea was to go to Paris, but it stopped for advice every five minutes and after about an hour of uncertainty stopped for good and decided not to go at all. A guard yelled “*Changez pour Paris!*” so out we had to bundle with all the bags, rugs—and dog, for whom we had been forced to buy a first-class ticket. We got on a “leave” train full of undoubtedly the bravest but absolutely the dirtiest soldiers I ever saw. It took us four hours to do in that imitation train what it had taken us fifty-seven minutes to do in our illicit automobile.

We arrived in Paris just in time to hear the sirens announcing what turned out to be about the worst raid we ever had, but death had no terrors for us after Provins. So we went to the hotel. On arrival Mother and I were both just about two inches away from hysterics. We have been arrested several times for speeding in America, but that was in peace-time. Even then I never craved it as a pastime, but take it from one who knows being arrested in France—in war-time—by people who though they are charming give no clue by their gestures or intonations whether they are going to kill you or kiss you—is an experience that I would not



even wish on the Kaiser. I have been known to wish they would hang him, but then hanging is so nice and *speedy*.

We crawled into bed that night vowing all sorts of vows to be revenged on the Young Christians come what might, but I evidently got off the track, for I dreamed that I was a real spy and had lured the Crown Prince of Germany to supper with me. I was to fascinate him and then stab him with the butter knife—but he walked into the room and going directly to the table removed all the cutlery; he had evidently read that book, too!

The next morning the Y.M.C.A. called up to say that they were so sorry—it had all been a misunderstanding. We knew that, but we felt we were more misunderstood than misunderstanding, and agreed to call off our feud with the Y.M.C.A. and pick on our allies, the French—not because we did not like them but because we did not like their not liking us. So we decided to tell our troubles to a policeman and told them to the one who had some *force* under him, our Boss General, who from that time took us under his very splendid American eagle wings and made the rest of our stay in France one long winding French road of roses.



## BLIND \*

“Blind! and these poor old eyes of mine  
That never missed a thing  
Have done their bit  
And never again will feel  
That sudden sting  
That comes from holding back a tear  
Or reading a bit too much.  
Well, at least they left me one thing  
A d——n good sense of touch.

“Blind! and these poor old eyes of mine  
That some folk said were blue—and others  
    green—  
You’re finished—that’s the end of you,  
And never again will you declare a coat is  
    badly cut,  
We will just be sure that it feels OK  
And keep our old mouth shut.  
Blind! well of course it’s rotten  
And it’s going to be hard as hell  
To meet a pal  
And not be able to say he’s looking well.  
But then again there is one thing—  
I shall never know the pain  
Of being embarrassed and murmuring  
‘By Jove! it looks like rain.’

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\* Having been two years over there, and singing nearly every day for wounded in England and meeting many blinded in this war, I write this. It is typical of the men I’ve met.

“Blind! The man who has lost his arms  
Says, ‘Thank God, I have my eyes!’  
But this one reaches out in the dark  
And touching her hand cries,  
‘As long as those fingers cling to mine  
As long as I feel the pain  
When they leave, and the joy when they come,  
I shall not complain.’  
My love is now unending, for I shall always see  
Her face as it looked by the garden gate when  
    she said good-by to me.  
I shall not know when she’s fading,  
Her voice will be ever of gold,  
Her hair will be soft—like new-spun silk;  
I shall never know her old  
As long as she stands beside me  
Not weeping—laughing instead,  
As long as my lips can find her own.  
Thank God! I am blind and not dead!”

## CHAPTER VI

### WE JOIN THE A.E.F. AND MEET THE BOSS OF SAME

**A**FTER being virtually spanked and sent home by the French military authorities, one would think we might have been a bit subdued. I must say Mother's ardor was absolutely drenched, but I felt more warlike than ever, and decided to start a first-class offensive all on my own. So while the Y.M.C.A. were busy trying to wring apologies from the French officials, I put up my barrage in the form of a telegram to G.H.Q., addressed to Colonel C., the Boss General's aide, who had been very nice to us at Chaumont and who had spoken in glowing terms of my work for the boys. I sent the following telegram: "If you consider my work for the soldiers of any value, will you please tell the French military authorities—we cannot get motor pass. Have got the car, driver and gasoline, and still cannot move. Elsie Janis."

The next day when we came back from a visit to the hospital, we found a U. S. Army sergeant waiting for us. He presented us with an American Army movement order—just like regular soldiers

have and a telegram saying that everything would be done to facilitate our getting to Chaumont, where the boys were anxiously awaiting my return. Perhaps I did not feel important, but it's more likely that I felt rather too large for our apartment and could not have made any one of my hats go on my head. The pass read we were to move either by motor or train, and just as I was rehearsing in my mind what I would say to the Bearded Boss of Provins when we sailed through his domain, the telephone rang and Miss Janis was wanted by American Headquarters. By this time my chest was out so far it was difficult to talk over the 'phone, but I managed to hear from Colonel C. that they had a G.H.Q. car for our use, that they would send it for us if we so desired, or if we cared to come up by train it would meet us. After Provins and various other vain attempts to leave Paris by motor, a train looked very good to us—at least trains can't be told to turn around and go home. So we said we would leave next morning, and we did—and said farewell to our chauffeur and the Young Christian Packard at the station and got on the train with the entire French Army. I never saw so many medals in my life. The train left at eight a.m. and the sun looked rather dazzled by those shining medals. The train was carrying just twice as many people as it could seat, and there was only one other woman on it besides Mother



and myself. The corridors were full of charming bright-eyed officers, standing from Paris to Chaumont, four hours and a half. That is my idea of war such as Sherman never saw. I never can eat at eight in the morning—my inner-man does not come to until ten, so with great forethought we reserved places for the first service of lunch at eleven.

If I had ever had any doubts about the French as fighters they would have been dispelled by that first big advance on the "wagon restaurant." We were among the first "over the top," as by eleven my inner-man was wide awake and ready for the attack.

Two heavily be-medaled officers occupied and helped us to hold our position against all attacks. One of the strangest things about Anglo-Saxons in a strange land is that they nearly always think that they are the only ones in that land intelligent enough to speak two or three different languages and immediately begin to talk about our neighbors in English. Mother and I were just about to do it, when one of the medal swingers leaned over and said in about the most perfect English I've ever heard—"Pardon me, but are you not Miss Elsie Janis?"

A thrill ran right up my back and buttoned around my neck. I thought we were "pinched" again. I was just about to reply in French that

I did not speak English, when Mother, with no sense of shame and apparently ready to die game, said, "Yes! This is Miss Janis."

"Ah!" said he. "I thought I could not be mistaken. The last time I saw you (I trembled and wondered if it could be the man from Provins without the comic face-fitting) was at the Century Theater, New York."

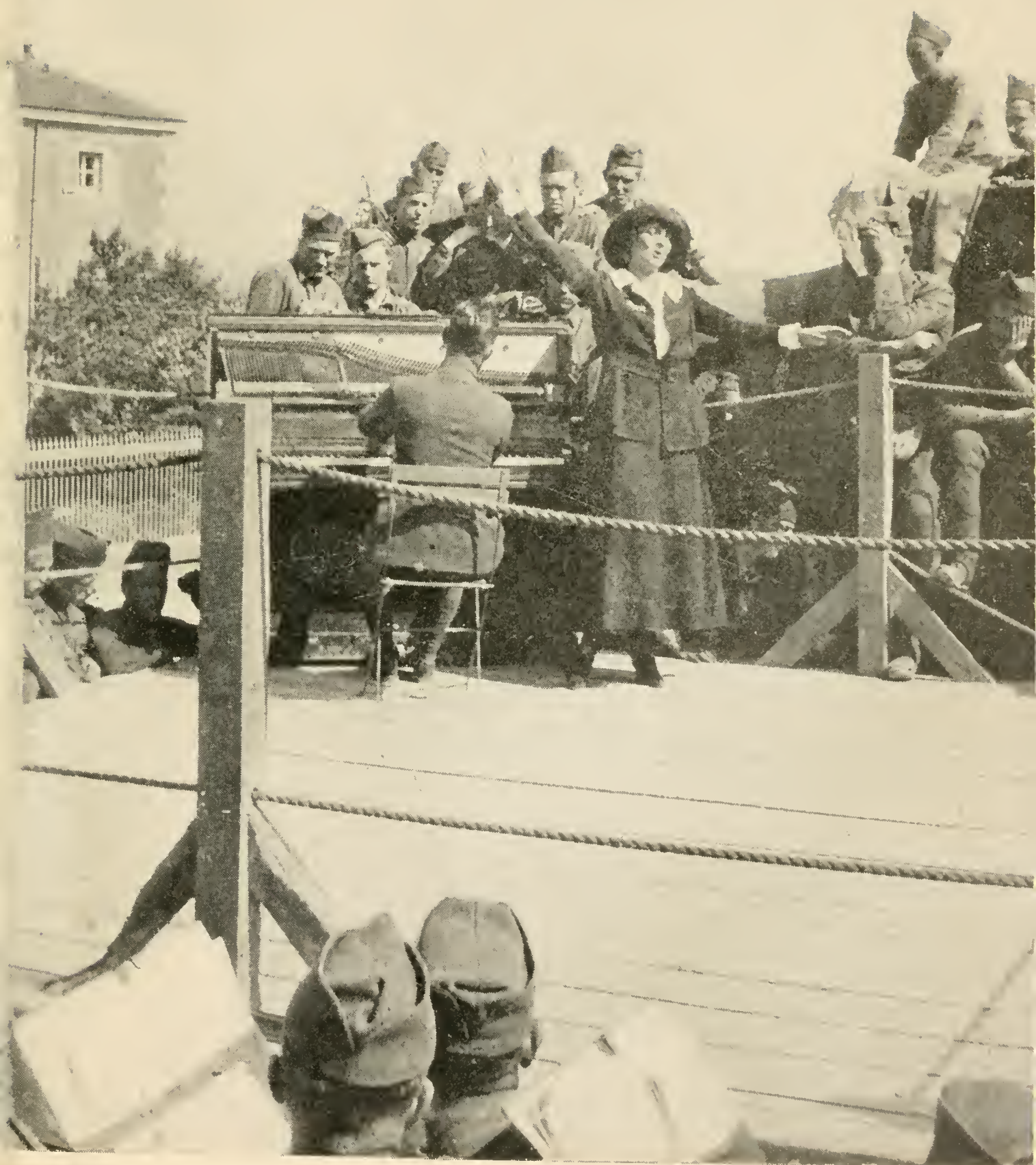
Mother and I sighed in a perfect harmony of relief, and ordered a bottle of *vin rouge* on the strength of the fact that the Century was all he had against us. We chatted through lunch and then said *Au revoir*. War certainly has killed conventions.

Mother and I picked up acquaintances all over the place, and I don't ever expect to stop doing it. Why shouldn't we speak to people if we like their looks? Life is so short and we might never see them again. I went out one day in a little town in France to buy Mother a birthday present. An American soldier on a motor bike with a side-car came along beside me, and in his best Army French said, "*Bonn jouer, Mademoiselle,*" and pointing to the side-car—" *Voulez-vous aller?* "—and I said, "Where did you get that stuff? I'm American."

No whiz-bang ever gave him a shock compared to that one. His mouth literally fell open as I continued, "My name is Janis—Elsie Janis."

He looked blank, and then said, "Oh, I don't





DOOR MINNE LETOURRRR! LOOK AT HER NOW AND BEFORE THE YANKS CAME!"  
( 64)





care what your name is, but please excuse me. I thought you was French."

I thanked him for the compliment and said I was sorry I could not go riding. He saluted as if I had been a General and rode away, but I simply loved it, and I can't help wondering if some day when we are both old he won't tell his grandchildren of the day he "picked up Elsie Janis the actress on the streets of N. in the great War."

Maybe by that time he will have heard the name. That's the only "pick up" I ever slipped over on Mother. She is really a much better picker than I am. All this is irrelevant, but forgive me, I do so enjoy living over every minute that I write, that my Waterman "ad libs" a bit now and then.

To get back to our "*moutons*." We arrived at Chaumont at one. We were met at the station by a great big khaki-colored Cadillac eight—and an officer who took us to the hotel.

This time there was no doubt about our importance in the eyes of the hotel personnel. Before, when we were in Chaumont, I think they thought we were sort of traveling minstrels—who were ambitious and by way of taking it out on the poor soldiers, but this time we arrived in an Army car with a Headquarters sign on its front and back. They could not miss it, and so they practically carried us in and up to our rooms—this time on the first floor, but also on the courtyard where every

morning at six the French waitresses put up a creeping barrage of light French conversation that made any air raid sound like an old-fashioned lullaby.

In the afternoon Colonel C. and Colonel M. C. C. came to see us, and say that everything was going to be very easy for us from then on. That we were to dine with some of the Boss General's staff and then the Boss himself would like us to come out to see him in the evening.

I have met Kings, Queens, Princes, Presidents, artists, burglars and theatrical managers without a tremor, but I must say I was rather sort of—well—a kind of in a way a trifle—more or less—oh, well! what's the use I was scared stiff! I don't remember dinner at all, but I do remember that on the way out to the General's château (Oh yes! even he had one) I kept thinking—"Just suppose he don't like me—he could just bat one eyelash and we would return to Paris and perhaps America '*à pied*' as the French said we could do, as far as they were concerned."

I have always liked our General's looks and have loved that strong "take it or leave it" expression of his, but until I talked to him I did not realize what it was that made all his men feel as they did about him. They did not fear him, and they did not love him, in the soft sort of way one loves people who are older and have done great things. He

has—and is—their boss “Black Jack”—and they are *for him*—from the training camp where they learn to hold a gun to the hospital where perhaps they learn that they will never hold another. When we went in he called me “Elsie” and said, “I suppose I may be allowed to do that, as all the men do.”

I wanted to say, “Call me anything you like, Jack, I will come at top speed,” but I only said “Oh yes, sir.”

Then someone suggested that I should sing him a song as he had been away when I trouped in Chaumont and had to leave again next day for some front. I hated the idea and felt very much like I felt when as “Little Elsie” Mother had me do my imitations in a well-known manager’s office, but I told a story and the lid was off. Mother had to stop me—I was so carried away by that big man’s laugh I could have gone on forever. When I had finished, he said, “Elsie, when you first came to France someone said you were more valuable than a whole regiment—then someone raised it to a division, but I want to tell you that if you can give our men this sort of happiness you are worth an Army Corps.”

I said, “Well, General, you ought to know your own Army.”

Before we left he told me that I was to go anywhere that I wanted to where there were American



troops. I don't expect to ever feel as proud again. I don't know that I ever want to—I would prefer to keep that one time stored in my memory box.

I arrived home with a snug comfy feeling in my heart. I had passed my exams and had made good. I was a regular soldier and my day was complete.

I've neglected to say that I did manage to see the château as we were leaving. I was too nervous to do so when we were arriving. It was a lovely place, and the one thing that *sticks* in my rather hazy impression of it all was the fact that grazing all over the meadows around the château were crowds of snow-white cows—I had never seen a chorus of snow-white cows before, and I must say that in the twilight they looked absolutely naked and unashamed—a flock of bovine September Morns—chewing as unconcernedly as if there wasn't a war on—but now that I think of it from my slight acquaintance with cows they can't have any sense of shame or they would not stand for lots of things that they do stand for.

For the next ten days we made Chaumont our headquarters, and from there we dashed all over the country to camps sometimes as far as two hundred kilometers away—places where there was no accommodation for ladies or actresses.

So we always came back to the Hôtel de France and the chatty waitresses. I did not get much sleep, but I had a grand time. We had a regular



soldier for a driver and officer in charge who gave us a tone, and was very attractive at the same time. I called him my aide because I had never had an aide before. I think I will get one after the War. There will be a lot of good-looking aides looking for some one to aid, I'm thinking.

It was very amusing to see the soldiers along the roads. When they saw the Headquarters car coming, they would stand at attention and salute—then as we passed them they would see who it was and the very stiff salute would change into a most informal wave of the hand. By that time they had all heard that we were in that neighborhood, and everywhere I went the boys would yell, "Hello, Elsie, give us a show."

Many a time we stopped where some of them were working on railroads or building camp huts and I told them some stories. Here is one I picked up.

An American machine gunner having fired about five rounds stood up, stretched himself and yelled over to the German lines, "Now, Mr. Kaiser, count your men."

For details of my one-night stands around Chaumont, I will quote my old reliable friend Diary!

*Saturday.*

Lunched at hotel. Went out to the hospital, gave shows in eight wards and one in the big hut.

Went to see Colonel H., who is laid up out there. He says his colored soldiers have done very well and lots of them have been given the *Croix de Guerre* by the French, who think they are splendid.

Picked up a good story about them.

A big brown buck private was out in a shell hole carefully covering up three very dead Germans, having removed everything that would come off. He is crooning as he works and singing "You shall be free, oh, Mona—you shall be free." A Captain yells at him, "Hey there, Mose, stop that singing, the Germans will hear you and they will come over." Mose yells back, "Dey been over, Captain, and dey done gone home.—You shall be free, etc."

Came home to dinner—changed and went to Headquarters, an enormous enclosed square with buildings all around it. Gave the show in the middle of the square on a big motor truck—all decorated with flags—about two thousand men. It was very windy, and my pleated skirt started doing a splendid imitation of a Handley-Page taking off. I banked and fell into a *vrille* to the back of the truck and put on a lot of ballast in the shape of a good old-fashioned safety pin fastened firmly between my not too unshapely but decidedly thin "twigs."

The boys were so nice about it—in fact every day over here I am convinced that the American

soldier's attitude towards women is one of the most glorious things in the war.

Stopped at the officers' Y.M.C.A. club on the way home—a charming place with charming women doing everything in their power to make it like home. Some day someone with the powers of description of Hugo, Balzac, Dickens and a few others will try to describe the splendid work done by the Y.M.C.A.

Czar of Russia assassinated.

Very tired tonight—not the Czar—myself.

*Sunday.*

Left Chaumont at eleven—went to Neufchâteau to lunch with some officers in a charming old French house—an old Frenchwoman keeps house for them who was two years in a French town taken by the Germans; she can put more feeling into these two words “*sale boche*” than anyone I've met so far.

Went on to Bazoilles—Johns Hopkins Hospital—a return engagement.

They have a full house now and are rushed to death.

Sang in seven wards—and gave one show in the Y. hut. Dashed back to Neufchâteau—had dinner and gave a show there also in Y. hut. Otto K., distinguished visitor from America, was there—also F. P. A. of New York *Tribune* fame.



Mr. K. said he liked me better in the work I am doing than anything I have ever done. I was pleased. Think when we get home I will try to start another war just to show the folks what kind of a war actress I am.

Came back to Chaumont and a hot bath—I'm sure the French must think the two best things we Americans do are taking baths and collecting souvenirs.

Some Allied soldiers who were discussing what the different countries were fighting for summed it up in this way:

England for the Sea,  
France for Alsace-Lorraine,  
Italy for Trieste,  
and the Americans for souvenirs.

So far we've not met a doughboy who didn't have a German helmet. It's nice to think there are so many German *dead heads* about.

*Monday.*

Lunched here and then started for Gondrecourt—arrived at four-thirty and found I was scheduled for three-thirty. Most of the fellows had given me up, but we blew bugles and soon had about fifteen hundred of them back on the job.

Dined with the Colonel and then went on to Houdelaincourt for one show and Dainville for another. The latter in a boxing ring. If I keep on



playing in rings and getting used to four-sided audiences I shall not be satisfied in America with anything less than Madison Square Garden to play in—and Jess Willard had better look out.

Got lost coming home, and after riding at about fifty kilos an hour for an hour found we were on the road to Toul, absolutely the opposite direction from Chaumont.

Got home finally at 2 a.m. all in.

*Tuesday.*

Left Chaumont at twelve for Langres, where they have a law that no American soldier can get anything to eat after one-thirty. Past experiences have taught us that the word "Why?" with point of interrogation is not being used, so we ordered lunch while Lieutenant W. hustled over to the Provost Marshall and got a permit to eat.

Went to the largest supply base in France—Is-sur-Tille—again I don't know why it's Is-sur-Tille—because I did not see said River Til, but I did see five thousand engineers, and hear them. There were at least a thousand who could not get in.

I was furious, but could not give another show, as I was booked further along the road at Dijon, where I had disappointed them once before. So had to go.

The show at Dijon was at the hospital, where I

found lots of boys I had seen up in the Toul Sector. Mr. C., head of the Y.M.C.A., was there, and on our way home we came up behind his big open Young Christian Packard, which was kicking up more dust than any Christian car should kick up.

So after a short but sweet argument as to who owned the road, we breezed by and gave him some of the thickest A.E.F. Cadillac dust that ever flew.

I like Mr. C., he is a charming man—but dust is dust—and a Cadillac eight is a Cadillac eight.

We came back to Chaumont in two hours—one hundred and two kilometers.

Bill the music man stayed in Dijon for the night, so Mother and I were alone—shaking about in the back of the car. We held hands and sang “Where do we go from here, Boys?”

*Wednesday. Paris.*

Bill missed his train from Dijon and my throat is very bad, so we put off a show that we were to give at Chatillon en route, and came direct to Paris. The American Ambulance are giving a show here for our boys tomorrow, and Headquarters said I should be here, so we left Chaumont at two—stopped at a place called Montereau for gas—had to get an order for it from the Mayor—waited three hours and then I think the French made a mistake and put in *Vin Rouge*, for when we finally got started the car went about ten miles—just far

enough to be well away from everything, and after spitting, spluttering and coughing for about a mile died on us. We coaxed it, pleaded with it, and even pushed it, finally started it and did that seven times between Montereau and Paris.

We finally arrived in five hours absolutely worn out.

And this was to be a day of rest.

Did I say yesterday a Cadillac eight is a Cadillac eight? Well, today I say a Cadillac eight is just like any other "jitney" when she is given water with her gasoline.

*Paris. The Fourth of July.*

The French people certainly know the real meaning of the word "Fête" and they certainly proved it today.

The papers came out this morning with the announcement that there are one million Americans in France and five more millions to come if needed. A very good start for an American fête-day.

Flags everywhere—people all over the streets—aeroplanes all over the air and flying right over the roofs of the houses. I was washing my hair this morning and I thought one of the aviators was coming in to dry it for me—he certainly passed by the window.

To see this laughing, screaming mob—it seems



almost impossible, and less than a month ago we were called to the 'phone early one morning and asked where we intended to go if the Germans came to Paris! And that night we stood on our balcony and could plainly see the flaming of the big guns in the sky and hear their roar. Yet today people are lining the streets, cheering the shock troops—American, British, French and others who stopped them. Those gray beasts all dressed up in new uniforms for their trip to Paris. Surely the tide has turned and the millions of prayers have at last been heard.

All the war news is wonderful—the Boche is at Château-Thierry today—and he could shell Paris from there, in fact everyone has expected some nice little “Hun hate” to help make the day complete—but no! the Hun is too busy watching the tan and blue figures in front of them. They, too, are expecting something.

We lunched very gayly at Ambassadeurs—then went to the hospital and said “Happy Fourth of July!”—came home and dressed for the big show at Gaumont Palace. There were seven thousand people there—mostly soldiers—all kinds—but all with one idea: “*Vive l'Amérique!*”

Twenty-five hundred American and French wounded. I dressed all up like a real show actress, bare back and everything. When I slipped out on that enormous stage, my blue silk knees shook, but



when those boys began to yell I felt so sorry for the French people present that I forgot my own troubles. I assure you the French clung to their chairs in sheer panic. How could they know that "Atta boy!" "Oh, you, Elsie!" "Let's go, Elsie!" "Three cheers for Elsie of the A.E.F.!" and a few other wild sentences from all parts of the house could possibly mean that the Americans were pleased—and their whistles of every variety and in all keys which is the greatest sign of displeasure with a French audience! I could see them glancing furtively at the exits, wondering if it would be better to die seated in a plush orchestra seat or be walked on in the doorway.

I just let them yell and loved it, but when I finally held up one lily brown hand they stopped like one man! I told them that the Boss General had said though I was needed by the men up at the Front, everything must be done for those brave boys who had already been through it and won their laurels. Then they started again, but this time the French spectators had heard two magic words that they understood, and they joined in the yells with fervor. The magic words were General Pershing. Some "Open Sesame" in France, believe me.

I sang about seven songs—some in French—and then made them all sing "Over Here." Some thrill!

After my "act" some really good performers came on—six two-round fights and an exhibition by Georges C., champion of Europe. I have never thought I would like any man to beat me, but if one could do so, and look as angelic all the while as said G. C., I might think about it.

It was a wonderful night, and think of the work of transporting twenty-five hundred wounded to and from that place! Of course if the "Huns" had been perfectly sure there were that many maimed and helpless there, nothing would have prevented them from dropping a few bombs on them—but it all went off splendidly, and my idea of a fitting celebration for such a day.

I got a telegram from England asking me to come over and give a few shows for our fellows over there—they say they can't help it if they are not in France. So we will go—but must first continue my Chaumont circuit bookings.

One million Americans in France. Oh dear! Uncle Sam, have a heart. They are coming so fast I won't be able to see them all. I've never been crazy about myself really, but now when I hear that this division up at that place wants me—and that division at the other place wants me—I honestly wish I were twins.

What would Mother do, I wonder?

## THE MESSAGE

God looked down from His Great Blue Dome  
Into a dying baby's home,  
Where a mother, weeping, looked on high,  
And cried, "O God! don't let him die";  
But God said, "Courage, do not cry;  
He is with Me."

God looked down on a prison cell,  
Where a murderer sat in the throes of hell.  
"O God!" he cried, "grant me Your reprieve;  
I have scoffed at You, but now I believe;"  
And God said, "Ask, and ye shall receive;  
Rely on Me."

God looked down on a house of shame;  
He heard a woman call His name.  
"O God!" she cried, "why must I wait?  
Take me from the life I hate."  
And God replied, "It is not too late;  
Come unto Me."

God looked down from His Heaven again  
On a battlefield of slain,  
Where a priest was standing, cross in hand.  
"Help them, God," was his demand;  
And God replied, "I understand;  
They are with Me."

God looked down from His Heaven above  
And said to His children, "I am love";  
But the War Lords answered,



“Love is cheap;  
We want power, to hold, to keep;  
What care we if women weep?”  
And God replied:  
“Good. So be it. Go your way,  
But listen well to what I say:  
As you would have, so you must pay, and  
thoroughly;  
But when your mighty cities fall,  
When you are beaten one and all,  
And for salvation have to call,  
Come back to Me.”

## CHAPTER VII

WE GIVE PROVINS AND THE BEARDED ONE ZE BEEG  
“HA! HA!”

THE man who said “Revenge is sweet” knew nearly as much about said revenge as Sherman knew about poison gas and liquid fire as used in our “smartest” battles today. Revenge is more than sweet. It is saccharinely superb.

When we came from Chaumont we dodged Provins (the scene of our arrest by the French *militaire*), as our Cadillac was running like an “epileptic” scooter, and making such a row I thought we would get arrested again and this time for carrying concealed arms or illicit munitions, but after spending the Fourth in Paris, and feeling more than extra independent, we decided to return to Chaumont via Provins, and prove to the authorities as we said we would that we were not spies. When we drew up to the town by the *grande route de Paris*, and by the way according to the French every road that leads to Paris is the *grande route de Paris*—I think they are right, but aside from all that, at Provins the barrier which had taken the joy out of our lives was across the road. The same

guard with the lid, etc., approached the car, but this time rather "pussy-footedly"—as he had learned not to delay big tan cars with U.S.A. on them too long—and he knew that when a khaki-colored "guy" with a strong "Do you get me, Steve?" expression to his chin leaned out and and yelled "Ameercann" that it was equivalent to "*laisser aller*," which in Yank talk means Let's go!

So he approached and was just about to wave us by, when I leaned out and said "*Bonjour*; I remember you," or words to that effect, and then I showed him papers and passes—and passes and papers of all colors. He was delighted and absolutely bowed us through his gate, but wait! the big scene was yet to come. We must find the "bearded one" and in all our various tones from bass to soprano crow over him. We went to the station, where I jumped out, ran in and literally bearded the lion—in his "*gare*." I am sure he had thought I was resting somewhere near Mons. Bolo Pacha, and was not glad about it, for his face lit up at the sight of me and I've never seen such a smile as broke through that hirsute face-trimming of his. I led him out to the car and we showed him all "them papers" like they do in melodrama. On all of them he saw written "by command of General Pershing." "*Ah oui*," he said. "*Le Général Pershange*"—and I could not help being pleased over



the fact that he had heard of General P. even though he did pronounce the sacred name with a "ge" as in orange. I asked if he would come over to the little tavern and have something to drink. I should have said gargle, as most of those French syrups taste like glycothymoline, but he called it something else. "*Ah oui, un apéritif,*" he said. Just as the British stop anything from a wedding to a war for *tea*, so the French do for their *apéritif*. It should be called *imperative*. We drank a lot of drinks that reminded one of Barnum and Bailey's, and ye good old "pop." Peanuts were sadly lacking.

Of course he said he always felt that we were all right. And obviously charming ladies. I wanted to say that we had noticed how anxious he had been to keep us in Provins two weeks before, but the victory was already ours, and we could be generous. So we bought him another "tooth-wash," and finally tore ourselves away. He was standing on the very spot where he had assisted in our arrest, yelling "*Vivent les Américains!*" We rolled off yelling "*Vive la France!*", but he was all alone—and his beard cramped his speed a bit.

We were five and all beardless—so we won—*fini la guerre de Provins!*

I could not help regretting that Frank, our own chauffeur, was not there to share our victory as he had shared our disgrace, but he was off with his

young Christian Packard driving Burton Holmes *all over all* fronts. The French had no objection to B. H. going anywhere he liked, but then you see Burton H. has a *beard*, and that must be a great bond of sympathy—if you're not ticklish.

We went on through to Chaumont that night—early to bed—to get a good rest before starting on what looked like a rather busy week. I went to sleep at once, and dreamed that one of the crowd of “only men I ever loved” had grown a long blond beard, and I was making heroic efforts not to laugh when he was saying the same things that used to thrill me. Oh yes! decidedly, I am strong for a *Gillette* every time. I think some woman thought of that famous line “Safety First”!!!

*Chaumont. Saturday.*

Got up quite early and went to Chatillon. Through some blunder they did not expect us to lunch—so we went to the little hotel, but the dining-room was full and the other half of the French army was waiting to relieve those who held the position—so we retired. Then we saw an even smaller hotel—we went in—but I could *hear* that the dining-room there was also seeing action. We were just going to leave when there appeared from under somewhere a British Tommy—he had evidently heard the racket made by our faces as they fell on the courtyard when we thought we were go-

ing lunchless. Tommy and two other Britishers—one a sergeant (hats off, please!)—were doing themselves extremely well in a small private room. I can't think why Chatillon has a private room—as it has no theater, and in books only actresses go to private rooms. However, Tommy said they would gladly vacate said room for us. We said "Certainly not," but if we might join them? Loud cries of "Hear, hear!" from the three of them—they were charming. They had seen me in London, but still they were charming. I asked them how they liked the Americans who were with them at their aeroplane supply base—and the sergeant spoke as only an English sergeant could speak.

"Well, miss," he said, "we're quite pleasantly surprised in the Americans. We always thought they was a sort of 'blow'ard' kind of people—but we like 'em fine—and believe me I've got about sixty men working over there—but when I want something *done*, and done the *same day*, I send for an American." And he meant it.

One great thing about the British—I have found that though they may at times freeze us, when they do warm up it's a nice steady glowing warmth and they have not yet learned that very popular indoor and outdoor sport at which we Americans excel—"tossing the bull." I must say the French are expert at it. To hear as I have heard an American doughboy telling a French poilu how



great he (the *poilu*) is—is something that can only be approached by hearing a *poilu* tell a doughboy how he (the doughboy) has saved the situation.

When you have heard them both—then you know that in “tossing the bull” those two nationalities—American and French—have all others tied—and even the Spaniards are looking for a new national sport.

Mother says lots of people won't know what I mean by “tossing the bull”—so in case there is anyone so young or so old that they have not heard the expression, I will give a tiny example.

When Big Bertha was shelling Paris—an American was talking to a Frenchman, as follows:

*American:* Gee! it's wonderful how they can hit the heart of Paris. One shell dropped on the Madeleine.

*Frenchman:* Oh! but, Monsieur, you Americans are so wonderful—I am sure you will soon have a gun better than Bertha—in fact, all you will ask for is an address and the shell will go there!

That, oh! gentle reader, is Bull!!! as tossed *à la Français*.

By the time we had finished lunch, the *Entente Cordiale* was absolutely rampant.

We agreed that America and England were two great countries and ought to get together and that it was a pity the Americans were not with the British more than they were—for when men fight and



die together they really know one another—and I have always found that when an Englishman and an American really get to know one another it's a splendid friendship.

After lunch they had to get back on their job of building big bombing machines which were to put fear into the hearts of the Huns. I went to my job, which was tiny by comparison, but I often thought if I could put laughter enough into the hearts of our boys, I might also be giving a slap to the Huns. A smiling enemy is much more disconcerting than a frowning one, because you don't quite know whether he is laughing with you or at you until you come into some dressing-station.

At Chatillon I had the usual "merry mob" and gave an hour's entertainment, then dashed back to Chaumont, changed and went out in the opposite direction to a little town called Jonchery, where we dined with the officers of a munition school.

This little camp was charming. Up on the side of a hill—all laid out with little duckboard walks, leading from one cabin to the other—before dinner they took us into the schoolroom, where there was a blackboard—desks—benches—only instead of teaching children about life and its greatness, they teach men about death and its quickness. It is hard to imagine so many different kinds of deaths done up in so many different little insignificant looking packages. Bombs, grenades, guns, bullets,

rockets of every nationality. Those fellows knew more about death than any undertaker. They had every German hell-raiser in existence, and the coy names they had for them! A most harmless looking hand grenade called "the hair brush"—I suppose the idea is that once it hits a German he has no hair left to brush. Another called the "potato-masher"—Well! all I have to say is I'm glad I'm not a potato or a German! To see those kind, smiling Yanks simply gloating over those horrors was almost terrible to me. Fellows who at home would not use fly-paper because they wouldn't like to see the flies struggling—absolutely caressing a gas bomb that they knew would kill everything within twenty feet. I did not try to figure out why or wherefore, because dinner (?) was announced—and some dinner! Their passion for bombs and grenades had not spoiled their appetites for chicken and fritters—because they looked upon the latter with the same glowing eyes they had cast upon the "potato-masher."

After dinner we rode down to the "theater," which consisted of two motor trucks up against a wall. There were a lot of colored troops there. I couldn't help wondering if they were so crazy about bombs, etc.

One of the officers told me a story which is apropos.

A colored soldier on outpost duty, and it gets a

bit thick. So he comes running back at great speed and bumps into an officer, who says, "Hey! what's the idea of leaving your post of duty?" Colored soldier says, "Oh Lord, boss—the shells is just raining out there. One went right by my nose."

*Officer.* "How do you know it was a shell? did you see it?"

*Soldier.* "Did I see it? I seen it twice—once when *it passed me*—and once when *I passed it*."

We had a great time and they gave me a lovely bouquet—of poppies, cornflowers and daisies—forming the eternal tricolor of France!

I had only one personal friend in that crowd and he could not come—he wrote me a note saying how sorry he was! I don't blame him—he was in the *guardhouse*. I wanted to go to see him and sing him a song, but they suggested I had better not. It seems that the guardhouse is quite an entertainment in itself.

### *Sunday.*

Went to Bourbonne les Bains. It being Sunday, took a rest—only one show. Funny little town—very chic watering-place—before the War! The Casino used to harbor heavy gamblers—it now does the same thing to Young Christians!

The baths used to cure rheumatic Frenchmen—they now *clean* athletic Americans—ah, yes! Bourbonne les Bains has changed.



We went to the little hotel, where we retired to rest, but before we could make it, down the street came the regimental band playing "Over There" as if it was not Sunday at all. I gave my show on a tiny stage of a tiny theater in the Casino gardens. And the entirely family of Bourbonnes were there. Really, more French people than Americans. I was not particularly pleased because, after being so happy up at the front on a table with a crowd of grinning doughboys all around me, I rather resent the social atmosphere of Bourbonne les Bains. However, I did my best and we came back to Chaumont. I think what really depressed me was that all the Yanks looked so clean—and I must admit the dirtier they are the more I love them, and the more they love me for loving them enough to dance with them, even at the risk of acquiring a restless "cootie."

Tonight went out to say good-by to the Boss General, who is always going away. Curses!

*Monday.*

A crowd of wounded arrived today from one of those small but sure "pushes" the Yanks are putting on 'most every day. I went out and worked in the wards—gave five short shows—came back—put on my other hat by way of kidding myself into a change of costume—and went out to a little place that sounds much prettier than it looked. La Ville

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au Bois—I did not see the *ville* or the *bois*, but I did see—and smell—and partake of—a most wonderful dinner with the officers of a famous regiment of engineers who specialize in putting on "hours of hate" for the Boche—that is, they travel about from sector to sector, and when our people want some especially deadly gas these fellows arrive and put on a Dillingham production of "poison gas" assorted. I must say they did not look like death-dealing desperadoes, in the least. An awfully nice crowd. After dinner we went over to the gas school—where our fellows learn the art of gas throwing—it was a large camp. And to the right and left were comic-looking little cube-like gas chambers—where they try the gas.

My idea of a rotten job is a "gas tester." He dresses all up in a gas mask, which in itself is always good for a laugh if he don't smother himself trying to get it on—then he thinks one last thought of home, mother and the good job he left, and steps inside the gas chamber. If he comes out alive it's a success for him—but if he don't the gas is good enough for the Germans—and they get it.

There were lots of fellows in the audience who had been in the gas chamber and came out with everything but their voices—still they could laugh.

After having all different kinds of deadly gas tried on you, even my singing might be a relief.

As I was leaving, a big Army car arrived with a Colonel and a Major who came up to me and said that they had ridden seventy-five miles to beg me to come up to their camp—where they were very short of entertainment. They came from Colombey-les-Belles—an aero-supply station. I said if it was worth a seventy-five mile ride to them to ask me to go, it was certainly worth the same ride to me—so we arranged it. Only six shows today. Very slow!

I am sure that when I go to America a nice little movie theater where they start at eleven a.m. and finish at eleven p.m. is going to be about my speed. Elsie Janis—the human film!

*Tuesday.*

I have always been quite proud of the fact that I come from Ohio—even though I did so when I was too young to know a dry State from a wet one. Until four years ago we had a home in Columbus—which we only saw about once a year—but which was quite one of the “sights” of the city.

If you were pally with a North High Street car conductor he might ring the bell in front of El-Jan (name suggesting it pays to advertise) and whisper to you, “That’s the home of Elsie Janis!” And if by chance you were just the usual sort of person and never had heard of me, you would have probaby been put off the car. That’s finished now



—we have sold the homestead for only about five thousand dollars less than it cost—a very good deal considering the amount of sentiment connected with it—but as I was saying before I lost myself in a maze of memories and old home town stuff—I have always been proud of this, but tonight I am super-proud—I have been out to a "threat of a town" known as Mandres. When I arrived at five-thirty, about three thousand men were already there—and for the next half hour they kept on arriving—company after company. They were marched in regular formation for miles around—some came as far as ten miles—and they called it entertainment. As we approached there came to my ears, wafted by a rather damp French breeze, the old familiar strains of "Ohio, Ohio"—that to me had always meant O.S.U. (Ohio State University) as out for blood—but not the kind they were after in France. Just regular college football blood.

Then I heard that "Wah-hoo-wah-hoo—rip, zip, bazoo—I yell—like Hell—O.S.U."—and then I knew. I had struck my own gang—I thought we had heard some yelling in France, but I was wrong—those fellows must have disturbed St. Peter's afternoon "nap" considerably.

We finally got them all there by about seven, and what a party! I was their girl from their State—and I'm sure each man there felt that he

had played with me when I was a child notwithstanding the fact that when I was a child I did a lot more working than playing. I could have hugged each and every one as if it had been true.

I gave an hour and a quarter alone, and then the real fun started. One boy came up on my platform and sang beautifully alone—then we sang duets—the two bands vied with each other on “jazzing it up”—then we start a sing-song—now it’s getting dusk—the sun has become bored by our having reached the sentimental stage and has left us, for now we are singing “Perfect Day”—and the “Long, Long Trail”—to hear four thousand men, each one with some one person in mind, singing “To the day when I’ll be coming down that long, long trail with you” is wonderful—but to hear them sing it three thousand miles from home—with a soft French twilight descending as if to veil the rather limpid light in most of those brave eyes—is a thing that has to be heard and then remembered until the “long, long Trail” ends.

Pull yourself together, Private Janis! you are getting sloppy!

The stars and moon butted in before we realized that it was time to quit, and I literally tore myself away—after shaking hands with at least a hundred who knew me, when they had those long return hikes to make—poor boys! I felt like trying to take each one home, but whistles blew—there were

several different variations of the old familiar "Squads right, etc.," and away they marched in different directions, singing different songs. Bless them! they have not been in action yet, but I know they will fight like they sing, with all their good Ohio hearts—and if I do say it as shouldn't—we grow very big hearts in Ohio!

It rained all day yesterday and part of today, so those boys who sat there for three hours singing, laughing and cheering were sitting in *puddles*.

Do I come from Ohio!? By damn, yes!



## CHAPTER VIII

### FORBIDDEN FRONTS

**W**HEN the Big Boss of the Big Show told me that we could go anywhere on any front where there were American troops, I was very pleased and immediately asked to go to all the places that had been "forbidden fruit" in the past. One bit of fruit which from its appearance and facilities for human comfort might well be described as the lemon in the basket of forbidden fruit was a place called Baccarat, up in what they call the Lunéville Sector. I had received telegrams from the divisions there asking me to come up, but every time I asked to go people looked at me as if I had asked for a season ticket to Heaven or the other place. After seeing Baccarat, I think it was the other place they thought of—but G.H.Q. said certainly, that if I wanted to go to Baccarat 'nuff said! So they gave us a few more papers and off we went. We left Chaumont at ten a.m. and stopped at Colombey-les-Belles for lunch.

The Colonel who had come down to Chaumont to ask us to come there met us at the camp and took us over to the officers' mess. It certainly is



AT VERDUN





going to be dull for us after the War, dining with one or two men—the War has driven any fleeting idea I had about getting married well out of my head, for I am not satisfied now unless I have at least a dozen good-looking Yanks passing me twenty things at once—and something tells me even an American husband, who is undoubtedly the best “tamed” of all, would balk at having an Army around the house even if he could afford it.

We lunched exceedingly well, as everyone does with the American Army in France. Certainly the poor dears at home who have given up so much in the food line so that the boys in France might eat would be gratified to see those same boys in action in the Messroom Sector. Personally I hold the world's record for “fritter stabbing.”

After lunch I gave my show outside the Y. hut in the broiling sun. Until the Colonel made a little speech by way of introducing me, I did not realize how important my visit there was. The Colonel had told the boys that he was going to Chaumont to get Elsie Janis and that he would not come back without her promise to come. He evidently expected a battle. The boys told me they never had a doubt about my coming after the Colonel got on the job—because if he went for me like he went for them I would come or go just as he said. Some Colonel!

My audience was half British—as one of the big

British bombing squadrons was five miles away. They arrived in motor trucks, Rolls-Royces and Fords—needless to say the Fords arrived first. It was a fine party. I sang some songs that they knew and at the end had the British singing “Over Here” in a style that would have made George Cohan green with envy. “Ovah-heah—ovah-heah—send a word, send a word we ah heah!”

True they were rather shy on r's, but when they sang at the end, “We won't come back till it's ovah ovah heah”—r's or no r's, you looked into those big baby-blue British eyes—saw the Bulldog shining through, and knew that they meant it.

I was enjoying myself so much that the much longed for Baccarat slipped my memory, and we got a rather late start for same, but finally got off amid cheers in English, French and American tones. Each place I go I want to stay, but perhaps it's just as well to leave them wanting more. My natural inclination is to give them all I know, and then go and learn some more to give them. On the way to Baccarat, Mousme, our priceless Peke, was taken ill, so we arrived there in a state of frenzy, and believe me one should be quite calm before taking in Baccarat.

As we approached the Lunéville Sector, ruin followed ruin. There was not an entire house standing—and yet people seemed to be living or at least existing there. Sad-looking cows browsed in court-

yards of what used to be houses, an occasional depressed looking horse stuck his head through a shell hole in a shattered wall as if trying to kid himself that he was on the inside looking out, when in reality he was only wearing the wall as a collar—discontented hens pecked about trying their best to enthuse over bits of shrapnel which should have been corn—altogether the Lunéville Sector looked very promising, and I began to get quite excited because I said to myself these people must be under shell-fire all the time, and Baccarat is even nearer the Front.

You see, it's really splendid playing under shell-fire. It "peps" you up so; not knowing which song may be your last makes you do your best, spurred on by the ambition that fills every performer's heart to make a good exit. I had felt that way at Toul, and had thoroughly enjoyed it. So Baccarat looked good to me. We arrived, and as we coasted down the hill into that town my fondest hopes were realized. Baccarat was literally shot to pieces.

The hotel was, as we say in our set, "all in." We rode slowly through looking for the *Crimson Triangle* amid the ruins. We finally found it on one of the most un-Christianlike old buildings I've ever seen. The Y.M.C.A. had just taken it over and had not had time to do much to it. It was two stories high and looked very much like those saloons



they always have in movies of the Wild West! If the outside was comic, the inside was certainly tragic. The Y. folks had made our two tiny bedrooms as comfortable as possible—nice clean beds, but the rest of the place was beyond description. I used a lot of mental science convincing myself that I did not want to bathe, see or do anything else in the civilized line. I kept listening for shells, bombs or something exciting, and finally I could resist no longer, so I asked the Y. man if they got shelled very often—and then the blow fell. “Oh, no!” he said, “we only have an occasional air raid. All these ruins are the result of the French retreat in 1914. And the French themselves ruined all these buildings getting the Germans out.”

Bang! went another hope. Baccarat was after all a fairly safe place, and as I looked out of my window I saw that grass, flowers and even trees had grown up in the ruins.

They sent for the Vet. for Mousme. There is nothing the American Army cannot produce.

We dined in our room, which is the only place clean enough to enjoy a meal in, and then went to give my shows in the only building the French had missed—the Cinema Theater. It was very nice and all whole. I gave two long shows, and even then some of the fellows could not get a seat, but they piled in somehow.

Had to give the shows early, as all lights must be

out by nine. They have had some terrible air raids, though for the last few days things had been calm owing to the fact that a new division had come in. The division they replaced was one famed for "treating them rough," and they gave the Hun some proof that they deserved their fame. So the Hun took his revenge in dropping things on Baccarat; when the "treat 'em rough" division left the Boche flyers came over and dropped a friendly little message saying "Good-by, ——— Division. We will get you yet." And when the new division arrived they sent another one saying "Welcome, ——— Division. Be good!"

So far the latter request had been granted, so things were fairly quiet, but I have never seen anything quite as dark as that town. It rained very hard after the show, but the Colonel had asked us to go out to his—well, I don't really know whether it was a château, house or barn. It was so dark. We rode out in the pouring rain without a light of any description—had a bite of supper—listened to one of the best piano players I've heard—and then went home.

Our hostelry was closed—barred—and from the odor inside I should think hermetically sealed—when we got there.

We yelled, coaxed, knocked on iron shutters (very gratifying!), but all of no avail. Finally our prayers were heard by just about the most impor-

tant personage in Baccarat—the traffic cop—better known as American M.P. He found one window that someone had forgotten to lock. Oh! it was closed—he got in and woke the keeper of the keys, who came down and let us in with a sort of a “Where did you find a place that stays open?” expression on his face. He lit us upstairs with one poor flickering little candle and told us we would find one each in our rooms. We did—after a search—but Mother as usual was away ahead of them. She had a flock of candles and by the time she finished with that two-by-four room it looked like an old Spanish church. We were just patting each other on the back when from the street in good old Down East tones came: “Hey! you’ve got too much light up there. Put it out!” I was all for blowing out ten candles with one blow, but Mother, who’s really a bit of a rebel and whose motto is “Not without a struggle,” went to the window and said as it was raining so hard there was no danger of *enemy airplanes*.

He was sorry, but *orders was orders*, so we decided it would be easier to go to bed—but even then we were wrong. There was nothing easy about my bed. It was built rather on the same plan as a Thompson Scenic Railway—sort of hilly like—and as I tossed from peak to peak or tried to squeeze in between them, I thought of all the world’s greatest martyrs and was just about to admit to myself



that they were amateurs compared to me, when above the constant pat-pat-patter of the rain on the roof I heard "tramp, tramp, tramp"! Oh! such a wet, soggy-sounding tramp, tramp, tramp. It came nearer and then I heard *whistling*—very softly at first but getting louder. Squads right! in a muffled voice. I jumped out of bed, lit a match, looked at my watch and saw that it was three-forty-five a.m. Then I had a hunch. "Just before dawn" is a very popular time for moving things in war. I ran to the window, had a battle with the shutters and leaned out. And there they were—some of the same boys I had played to that night going up to take their places in the Big Show. I leaned out quietly and they kept coming—each little bunch humming their own tune or whistling—and when I heard three of my own songs I could no longer resist. I yelled out "Atta boy!" They did not dare stop, but some of them knew that funny voice of mine and they said, "So long, Elsie. Come back soon."

I was so carried away at being in on that just before dawn stuff and seeing those tin lids, gas masks, rifles, etc., all going one way that I did not realize my teeth were chattering or that Mother was standing beside me weeping quite silently. Between sniffs she said, "You should not stand there in your nightgown." And between sniffs I answered, "They couldn't see me." "Oh," she said,

“I mean you will catch more cold,” and then we both leaned out again, knowing that we shared the same thought that a cold didn’t much matter when you thought of what those dear boys were going *into*—splashing through inches of mud—loaded down like pack-horses. Forward—to what? They did not know, and they were singing and whistling. We waited until the last man had gone, saying good luck! And then Mother for the second time tucked me into my Coney Island bed.

Believe me, I curled up on one of those bumps and went to sleep thinking how lucky I was to have a bed at all—and how more than lucky I was to be living near—seeing and giving whatever I could give to boys like those. Tramp, tramp, tramp!

Rain—mud—slush—and they had about five miles to go before getting into the nice “comfy” front-line trenches where knowing how to swim is almost as important as knowing how to shoot.

The next day was a lovely sunshiny one—the kind of a day that seems entirely out of keeping with war. We got up early, and having heard that there were a lot of fellows up in the rest camp behind the lines who could not come in for the show, we started out to try and give them whatever fun we could, without pianos, stages, etc. We hung the old gas masks on our necks, carried the tin lids and started to get into the car, when we were informed that our masks were not regulation. So

we had to go over to the Q.M.S. and get the latest model as worn in the Lunéville Sector. The only improvement I noticed over our own masks was the fact that with the ones they gave us there seemed to be no doubt that anyone trying to put one on in a hurry would certainly beat the gas to its job by strangling themselves to death. We finally got off—the nearer we got to the Front the more picturesque the scenery became. Lovely sylvan woods, all cool and shady but filled with some of the meanest-looking big guns Uncle Sam possessed—we got up right close to the lines. There was quite a show on, but my first audience had just come out of the line and were so glad to be alive that they did not seem to hear the guns at all. So I pretended not to hear either. There were only about two hundred of them—and they sounded like at least two thousand. I gave the show on the grass, down beside a little brook—well shaded by trees. Two or three huskies had dragged a piano up from somewhere, from the sound of it I should say they dragged it out of the brook. Bill knew it was not a piano and I knew it was not—but the piano was very proud of its good notes—both of them! I only gave them half an hour and then went on to the next camp! There the show was in an ancient machine shop. Another half an hour show to about four hundred. This time no piano, for which much thanks—because Bill's expression



when he touched one of those instruments of torture was so depressing that it took all the joy out of my performance.

From that place we rode about twenty minutes through a lovely forest and arrived at another little town—in the tiny little public square which though it was not labeled was undoubtedly called “Place de la République,” as no little French hamlet is complete without one.

There was a platform—I was a little ahead of my schedule—so we waited for the crowd to gather—in the meantime Bill, who had friends in every regiment in the A.E.F., disappeared—I don’t know whether his courage failed him when he saw the piano—but anyway he just naturally made a getaway. In ten minutes we had a big crowd—and I started telling stories—yelling madly for Bill after each one—but he was missing. Finally I got peevish, knowing that I had another show to give before lunch—and would be late. So I said, “Can anyone beat the box?” Loud shouts of “Can they?!” and up onto the platform stepped a slim little fellow with a pale face and modestly spoke thusly:

“What will you have, Miss Janis?”

I nearly said “I’ll take the same,” but asked for “I Don’t Want to Get Well.”

Could that Yank beat the box! I’ll say he could! He played everything I asked for and in any old key. He played a solo for me—Rubinstein’s

“Melody in F” in ragtime—and I was wishing the Huns could hear him.

About this time Bill appeared. I sweetly advised him to take a seat on a cobblestone and listen to a regular piano-player. Bill was a dear—he didn’t even get “up stage”—he agreed with me. I could have stayed there playing with those fellows for the duration of the War. But I had to get on.

I went there to give them pleasure—but certainly that time it was that boy’s show. The result of the “Jazz Jubilee” was that we arrived at the next little burg twenty minutes late, and just at lunch time. I had forgotten lunch until we landed right near the Mess and then I suddenly realized that we had only had a flirtation with a bit of toast and a cup of coffee that morning. Captain R., a very nice boy who was stage-managing the little tour, insisted that even actresses must eat. So we got the Commanding Officer’s permission to give the show immediately after lunch. In the meantime we had found two of our best pals from New York. So we lunched with them in their quarters. Maybe we didn’t talk and eat more in half an hour than seemed humanly possible.

Then we gave the show in the tiniest Y.M.C.A. hut in captivity. It was also beside a stream and about five feminine antiques were washing clothes in it. I must say they cramped my speed a bit. You know in France they don’t wash clothes—they

spank them—and just as I would draw near to the point of a story—pat, pat, pat would go the laundry ladies in unison. After a time it got on the boys' nerves, too. I think it sounded too much like machine guns to add to our pleasure. Finally an intrepid Major went out to stop them. Ha, ha! We stopped the show because we had a hunch his act would be funnier than mine.

“*Arrêtez-vous,*” said he, politely.

Fortunately he could not get the gist of the responding chorus. I could—but I'll never tell. Pat, pat, pat went the barrage of cleanliness and then Mother, who has never yet failed me at a crucial moment, slipped quietly out. I heard her speak one of her three French words. “*Attendez!*” I tried not to look, but at the same time was planning how I would have to knock her out before I could rescue her from the stream where the laundry ladies would undoubtedly put her—but lo! there was a silence. So sudden and so sweet as to be alarming. Mother had done the thing that will stop or start 'most anything in France—she had flashed a twenty-franc note. Some poor Yank did not get his shirt that night—but Elsie gave her show and those five ladies put up their paddles and called off work for a week. From there we went back to town and on the way stopped at the hospital, where I gave a short show in a tent—only about fifteen minutes. I was really about all in, and I had been



told that there were lots of wounded, and when I got there I found about six wounded, surrounded by at least a hundred nurses and fifty doctors. Though I love them all and know what wonderful things they have done in the War, by that time I had just about as much voice as if I had been gassed, so I just told them that I was "*kaput*" and beat it for Baccarat.

Now that all sounds like a day's work, but cheer up! the worst is yet to come. It was two-fifteen when we reached Baccarat. We took one last look at same and started on for Belfort, where I was scheduled for two shows that night. From Baccarat to Belfort is about one hundred and thirty kilometers and one of the prettiest drives in Europe. I must say the beauty of it left me cold that day. I had no voice—I had two shows to give that night—and the trip looked impossible—but we carried on. I didn't see the scenery—I had my eye on the clock—but it didn't matter, because in all our travels with the A.E.F., Mother and I were only going over ground that we knew by heart—for we had motored every summer all over the place. So this time it was just a case of get there! I hated the thought of missing a show—because one never knew whether they would ever get all the same fellows again. We beat it up and down those mountains like the Germans were after us, and we arrived in Belfort at six forty-five. I had sprayed and

gargled my throat all afternoon, and though it was not all there I did find a little voice. We were met by the Y. man in charge of the area, who informed us that the first show was at seven, but we screamed "It's ten to now!" "Well," he said, "they will wait all night if they know you are really coming!"

I said, "Telephone out and say we'll be there in an hour."

Belfort has a real hotel. In fact Belfort is a real town and has been for some time.

We rushed upstairs to a charming suite of rooms, looked at a lovely bathroom, glanced at a menu on which was printed a splendid dinner, but all that was not *War*, so I dressed with one hand, ate a sandwich with the other, and in exactly twenty minutes we were on our way to Rougemont, where those dear patient boys yelled and welcomed me as if I had not been one minute late, let alone one hour.

The show was in the public square, with the usual opposition of passing ammunition trains, automobiles, motor cycles and French children chattering, but I worked doubly hard because I was ashamed of being late.

There were a lot of fellows from Wisconsin and other Western States. They gave college yells, the band played, I danced with about ten and then was reminded that there was another bunch who had waited an hour. So we left—and dashed over

hill and dale—to the next place, which was one of the most interesting of all—a château, situated on the only bit of German soil the Allies held. I wouldn't dare say it was German soil if my French-Alsatian maid was among those present, because it was really Alsace-Lorraine, and though all French people claim that province has never been anything but French, all the signs in the little village were in German and all the natives spoke the language. What could be more fitting than that the Yanks should be holding that front? when every Yank went to war with the idea of getting back Alsace-Lorraine for France—which reminds me of a yarn they told me.

The Crown Prince of Germany has lost much in the War, but it seems that it was a Yankee private who got his Highness' Royal goat. The Yank taken prisoner was brought before the Crown Prince, who said in his most Kultured manner:

“What are you Americans fighting for?”

The Yankee said without hesitation, “Alsace-Lorraine.”

The Prince said, “And what is Alsace-Lorraine?”

The Yank smiled and said, “Why, it's a big lake.”

“There you are,” said the Prince to his staff, “these Americans don't know what they are fighting for,” showing that the higher they are the



harder they fall—and that the Germans don't know when they are being kidded.

We arrived at the château in Alsace and found the boys singing—after an hour's waiting.

It was a lovely place with a dear little stage out in front of the château. Flowers, palms, etc., all around it, and about one thousand boys making almost as much noise as the guns, which were going strong.

These Americans were sent to that sector for a rest because it was quiet. Well! if what was going on that night is their idea of quiet, I would like to show them Tarrytown, N. Y. I started my show, and after one number some local talent made its appearance. One of the boys had dressed up in some comedy clothes and a really funny make-up. He put over about ten minutes of regular "fun" while presenting me with a bouquet of flowers. He recited—sang—danced—and all the time I played "straight" for him. I found out after that he had been in vaudeville and he certainly was clever. I had a feeling that the day had been almost too good to last, and I was right.

There is always a dash of bitter with the sweet, and so the dash came. I was just about to start a song when suddenly I heard the old familiar and never less thrilling tramp, tramp, tramp—and then I heard in the distance "So long, Elsie. See you again," and then "Three cheers for our Elsie."

I stopped—quite stunned, as I had never been interrupted like that in all my work over there.

An officer down in front stood up and said, “Sorry, Miss Janis, but some of the boys have to go into the line.”

Well, my party was ruined, for I knew that had I been on time they would have been able to see the whole show.

I yelled “Good-by ” and they went off—two battalions of them singing “When Yankee Doodle Learns to Parlez-Vous Français,” the song I had just sung to them. I don’t mind admitting that my next song was shy on “pep ” and very strong on choked-back tears. They kept on yelling “Good-by ” until they finally faded away—their cheery young voices drowned by the roar of the Boche guns they were going to face.

I finished up my show, but could not get them out of my mind. We had a glass of “light wine ” with the General and his staff and then went home.

It was the end of a perfect day—eight shows—and I could not speak out loud.

The next morning we called a French throat specialist, who examined my voice box and said I must not sing for a week. I thoroughly agreed with him and went on to Besançon, where I gave two shows for about five thousand men—out at an enormous camp called Valdehon. They were fellows who had

just come over, so I got all the news from home and learned two or three new songs!

The next morning we left for Paris and went all the way through in one day, stopping at Dijon for lunch.

On arriving in Paris we got an urgent telegram from London asking me to appear for the American soldiers there—I answered that I would do so in two weeks, but in the meantime we were to go to the most forbidden of all fronts—the British Front!

### THE SLACKER \*

He was only a little penny clerk  
Before the war began,  
Just a clod of earthy common clay  
That some folks called a man.  
“Your King and Country need you!”  
Meant nothing in his life,  
Though he hadn’t any mother  
And he couldn’t afford a wife.  
He hated the thought of killing,  
He hated the blasted War,  
And he couldn’t be made to understand  
What the bloody thing was for.  
He was a slacker!

Conscription came and they snapped him up  
Before he could bat his eye,  
And they said, “Now, whether you will or not,  
We’ll make you a regular guy!”

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\* Dedicated to Guy Empey’s book “Over the Top.”



So they gave him a Tommy's uniform  
And they handed him out a gun,  
And they said, "You're going to fight, my lad,  
And get shot in the back if you run."  
In about four months they sent him out,  
He was weak in the knees and pale,  
And they knew in their hearts when the fun began  
That the blighter's nerve would fail.  
He was a slacker!

When they gave him a front seat up in a trench  
He sat in a corner and cried,  
While the Germans gave his comrades hell  
And men on both sides of him died.  
Then he saw his chance and he ran for it  
Right back of the lines like a dog;  
He ran and ran to an old cowshed,  
Then he dropped to the ground like a log.  
That night after sundown they found him there,  
They court-martialed him on the spot,  
'And it took just ten minutes to make up their  
minds  
That the white-livered cur must be shot.  
He was a slacker!

So they put him in charge of a sentry  
And marked him to be shot at dawn,  
He cried and he begged them for mercy,  
But they growled: "Shut your damn trap—  
you're gone!"  
He was sitting there moaning, not praying,  
When a whale of a big German shell  
Came straight on its way, not delaying,  
And knocked the poor sentry to hell.

When the slacker came to he was lying  
Face down in the mud, couldn't see,  
But he pulled his poor soul together  
And he saw like a shot he was free.  
He was a slacker!

Then all of a sudden he gets up  
And throwing his head in the air  
That low-down, blinkin' deserter  
Starts in a-saying a prayer.  
"O God!" he says, "I've been rotten,  
But give me just one little chance;  
Just say what I've done is forgotten,  
Let me die like a man here in France.  
God help a slacker!"

Then he ran like a hare to the trenches,  
And he grabbed up another man's gun,  
And he starts in to fight like a terrier,  
For the battle was nowhere near won.  
As he got there the Captain was saying,  
"Boys, it's a dangerous job;  
For the man's life who does what I'm asking  
I wouldn't be offering a bob."  
"Let me go," said a voice from behind him.  
The Captain just stuck out his hand;  
When he saw who it was he near fainted  
And then yelled out, "Well, I'll be damned!  
It's the slacker!"

He was over the top in a minute  
And gets back with the stuff that they want,  
With a look on his face right from Heaven  
And a courage that nothing could daunt,

But he says, "There's a fellow that's dying  
On the barb wire in No Man's Land,  
And I'm not going to quit without trying  
To give the poor devil a hand."  
So he's out on the job in a minute  
And he brings the guy in on his back  
And he smiles, looking for all the world like  
Santa Claus toting his pack.  
Is this our slacker?

He got his man back and was happy,  
He was far more than doing his part,  
When one of those damned German snipers  
Put a bullet right straight through his heart.

This is only the tale of a fellow  
Who grew into a man in a night,  
One who had lived his life yellow  
And finished it up pure white;  
They buried him there with the others,  
In a little garden in France;  
He asked for a chance to show them,  
And he did when God gave him a chance.  
He was no slacker!



## CHAPTER IX

### THE BRITISH FRONT

**I**T is very difficult to write of your own experiences without sounding very self-centered. Those few lines by way of excuse for the following!

On our arrival in Paris, I found waiting for me five offers to play and for real honest to goodness money. Three French managers and two British. The French impresarios having seen me at Gaumont Palace with five thousand Americans cheering my efforts decided that I was a "riot." I suggested that I did not always get so much applause when the spectators had to pay. They would not listen. They wanted me, but I was too far gone on the 'A.E.F. to concentrate on any real theater, so I thanked them and declined.

The British offers we said we would consider, as Mother and I both had a hunch that sooner or later I would have to make some money—for it was all going out and nothing coming in.

But a sixth proposition appealed to me—the one which asked me to come to London and play on

a Sunday night at my old home, the Palace Theater, where Sir Alfred Butt and a committee of very kind-hearted English managers were giving weekly shows for the American soldiers.

They gave these soldiers shows all winter, and our boys saw and heard the best artists in London for nothing. More of that later. When we walked into the British Provost Marshal's in Paris to receive our permission to go to the British Front, Foch, Clemenceau, Lloyd George and President Wilson were unimportant compared to us. At least in my estimation, for be it understood that that same front was "taboo" to some very important people—hundreds of English artists would have given anything they possessed to go, and were not permitted to do so—and when I announced to friends in Paris that we were going there, they looked at me with a sort of "Poor girl, too bad she drinks—she has nice eyes" expression. We signed papers agreeing to many things before we got the passes. Among the conditions were one that made me laugh. We had to promise not to go to Germany during the War. I assured them that I did not crave Germany though I did possess a pre-War contract for Berlin.

Our passes read "by command of General Pershing," and needless to say that one little line explains their existence.

On July 19th we left Paris at nine a.m., stopped

at Beauvais for lunch. When we rolled up to the little hotel about ten little French boys jumped on the car and held out very dirty little French hands.

"Ah," I said, "there must be some Americans here," and when we failed to get their idea and did not "come across" the little boys all swore in such good American that there could be no doubt about it.

During lunch the French waitress confided to me that they had had an American division there for a week "*en repos*" and were *désolées* because they had been taken away. She said that *les Américains* were so *beau*—so big—so frank—and she added so *generous*, as if she had never thought of it before, but I was way ahead of her—I've seen our boys go into a little town like that, "all paid up and nowhere to blow."

At five in the afternoon we arrived at *Abbeville*! What a change since the days when we used to stop there for lunch en route by motor from London to Paris! There was literally no place to live in the town, but the Y. man met us and took us on through town out to a charming château that the Y.M.C.A. were using with the kind permission of a French lady who was one of the most charming examples of true French hospitality ever seen. She retained two or three rooms for herself, and otherwise the entirely lovely house and estate were turned over to the Y.M.C.A. As usual we were a



little behind our schedule—so we grabbed a cup of tea and started on up to the Front. We passed through Abbeville again—and got a good look at the dirty work of the Huns. In one little square, or rather what was once a square and is now just a heap of ruins, we saw where nine houses had stood when one aerial torpedo hit them, went all the way through and knocked them flat, killing eleven British W.A.A.C.'s—a nice cheery sight to show me on my way up to spread gayety.

Our entrée to the sacred British Area was not particularly gay. It had been raining all day and to add to our joy bang! went a front tire. The driver fixed it with us all timing him—and we started on. Ten minutes later things began to get very interesting, one could hear the guns in the distance, and every minute we could hear that we were getting nearer to them. Bang! went another tire—and Willis the driver calmly remarked that *he* must mend an inner tube. Time never meant much in my life until I went to war, but I know I shall never go back to my old habits of holding the curtain again. I leapt out of the car determined to stop anything on wheels that was going towards the Front—even if it was one of the guns. Something came, but it was not a gun—it was an Australian soldier, which is almost as dangerous. I waved frantically and between being surprised at anyone daring to get in his way and the shock of

seeing a girl "up there," he nearly ran over the latter. You see I never wore a uniform, and in fact the men all told me I was the first *girl* they had seen.

Of course W.A.A.C.'s, nurses, ambulance drivers and all those other splendid examples of feminine heroism were considered by the men to be soldiers. I was just a girl in a blue serge suit—very thin silk stockings—a silver fox fur and rather a smart hat if I do say it—as shouldn't. I am sure that Australian had read carefully the Army rules about a soldier's conduct towards the women in France and was thoroughly prepared to live up to them. He was coldly tolerant—as I explained that I must get up to Molliens-le-Bois by seven. "Sorry," he said, "I've got to be at 'Somethingville' by seven." But I pleaded: "You must take us, I am going up to give a show for the Americans." "Oh," said he, "well, if it's for the Americans, jump in." And I'll say we jumped. Mother, Bill, the Y. man and myself. I jumped for the front seat—for though the Australian was rather freezing, he had a wind shield—and it was an open car.

We started off, and after poking along at about ninety miles an hour with that Australian, I am not surprised at the reputation his fellow-fighters have for *getting there!* I was almost as bent on melting that icy "Aussie" as I was on getting to the Front. So I had to work fast. We passed a

whole flock of artillery going up, and when he began pushing guns off the road with his fenders and yelling, "What the hell do you want—the whole —— road!" I felt as if we were old friends, so I ventured, "How do you find the Americans?" "Oh," said he, with what would have been a smile if the wind had not been so strong, "The Americans are O.K. They're *there*! We're holding some of the line with 'em—about one man every quarter of a mile! Oh, yes! we're for 'em. Why," he added, "they speak our language"—I did not tell him that I had realized that when we passed the guns, but I did "chuckle" at the idea of the Yanks and the Aussie speaking their own language on the British front. I could not resist reminding him as I often had to remind our boys that if it had not been for England they might never have been at all. He got my drift and he said, "Oh, I've got nothing against England, but there's entirely too damn much brass buttons about this here British Army." The Aussie, be it understood, wears a tunic that looks like a cross between a golf coat and a kimono. He must be comfortable when he goes "Hun-shooting." He is a splendid fellow, and, after all, brass buttons are a matter of taste. Personally I love them. By the time we reached Molliens-le-Bois, I had firmly decided Australia was on the map, for me, at some future time.

Molliens-le-Bois was charming, but wet. The



boys were waiting for me, hundreds of khaki-colored dots against the dark-green background of a very thick wood. I went into a tent—changed shoes—powdered nose—sprayed throat—stood on stones to keep out of a half foot of water and went to it. Fine crowd, mostly Americans with a smattering of Aussies and Tommies. They had built a platform for me right in the heart of the wood. We could hear the Boche aviators snooping about above our heads, but Nature's camouflage was too good and they could see nothing.

As I was leaping about festively to the tune of "Strutters' Ball," the platform gave way in the middle, and down I went out of sight. Being fairly husky I pulled myself out before the entire audience could come to my assistance, and fortunately Bill did not weaken, but kept right on playing. So when I came up, I came right on the beat and finished the song as if nothing had happened.

As my show was finishing, a whistle blew and here and there a Yank jumped to his feet, yelled "So long, Elsie!" and ran. I watched them in the distance lining up, putting on gas masks and other "weight," then I knew they were "going up." I stood leading the band as they all marched away. I changed the tune to "Over There," and they all sang it. I am getting quite used to being a sort of human *hors d'œuvre* now.

One of the officers said, "Those fellows will give

Fritz all that's coming to him, you see. The British give their men rum before a battle, the French cognac, and we give ours Janis."

I told him I had never been served as a drink before, but at any rate I was in *strong* company.

Most of that crowd were from Chicago, or thereabouts, and they had a jazz band that would drive Billy Sunday to drink—and make him do the "eagle rock." I asked if they could play the "Beale Street Blues." The leader said he thought so, and would I lead it? I said "Let's go," and we did. If I could only describe the joy of having about forty fellows all blowing their nice young faces nearly off just for you—but some things can't be described. I can only say that I quite forgot I had had no dinner, or that I must go on to another place, until the General sent orders that Miss Janis must *eat*, and that if she would not leave the band, the band must leave her. So we compromised. I went into a tent and had some food with the officers, and the band played outside. I know everything that was done for me in France was meant to be kind, but asking me to sit down calmly and eat with a band jazzing it up outside, borders on cruelty. While falling through the platform I had torn my stocking. A catastrophe! because my silk stockings were always one of my most important bits of equipment. Their contents never counted for much, but the stockings themselves I



know looked good to the boys after months of Army socks. So how to stop the *run* in same black silk equipment became a question of the moment. And can you believe that up there in view of the enemy, where the mud was a foot deep and I had to be carried to and from the stage, a little American sergeant stepped up with not only a needle and thread but with black silk thread! An event like that could have been a scandal, but it was a *real* blessing, and the sarge got three cheers—I never knew I could sew, before that time, but then I found out a lot of things about myself in France. Mother was there, of course, to help me as always.

From there we went to General B.'s headquarters, where out in the lovely grounds two thousand khaki heroes were waiting. About ten per cent. British, and it did my heart good to see our boys with their arms about the shoulders of the Tommies, for though I am very strong for France, and all her glory, I am also doubly strong for the English-speaking races! not only speaking the same language, but *understanding* each other when they do speak.

I gave the show on two big motor trucks backed up against each other—with the little bit that lets down at the back making the stage—about four feet in breadth. Some stage and believe me, turning a cartwheel in a space of four feet is more than a feat—it's a miracle.



My show was an hour and a quarter—because when there are British I have to sing songs from my London shows, just to even things up.

After the performance we went into the château and the General showed us on the big war maps what the Yanks were doing. The tide had turned, and the Huns were on the run. The French pushing them on one side at Soissons with the efficient aid of our boys. The British shoving them at Rheims and great things expected at Château-Thierry. I won't say that I was surprised, for I will back the Yanks to take objectives if they once get their chins well set, but I was proud, oh! so proud to know that our boys who had never been trained to the idea of war were able to come among seasoned warriors not only to hold their own but also take what they wanted. It was about nine-thirty and the Boche was starting his nightly display of fireworks. As we were driving home in the inky darkness the sky was ablaze with star shells, Very lights, etc. We were stopped six times by sentries, coming home.

Certainly the British front is the most exclusive of all, and no one could complain of its being dull. During the week we were up there the roar of the guns never entirely ceased. Just one nice long thunderstorm, but alas! no *rainbeam* in sight!

We reached the château at midnight, very tired,

and fell into our very nice soft beds. One could still hear the guns, and I went to sleep thinking what a nerve I had to be tired when hundreds of mother's *dear* boys were up there patiently obeying the order of "Battery ready—fire!" all day and all night.

The next day at dawn we were rudely awakened not by the guns, because one got so used to them and I must say I prefer them as an alarm clock—to what we got. It had rained all night, and of course we had our windows open. Sufficiency! At dawn started a concentrated attack by at least all of the regular army of flies in France, and some of the reserves. They had their own glee club and jazz band and of course all sleep was off. I was furious because I was in one of the few good beds I had met; however, the only thing to do was to pull the covers over the kid curlers and be grateful as Pollyanna would have been that that crowd of flies were not mosquitoes.

The flies won the battle, and when at about ten we got up from sheer fatigue, we found that our driver Willis and Bill the music man had taken the car and gone to Abbeville for inner tubes—and there we were sunk in that big lonely château. The hostess had gone to see her daughter some miles away—the Y. men were all out on the job—the servant had been told to give us our breakfast, but nothing about any other food, so had tea and

toast for breakfast and then again for lunch—and more tea and toast for tea.

It rained as it can only rain in France, and all our boys will back me up, I know, when I say that it is the most untiring rain in the world. We could not go out because we had no clothes to spare—we could not drive the flies out, we could not write letters because the hostess had taken the keys of the library where the ink was buried, so there we sat, and believe me, gentle reader, when Bill and the chauffeur returned about five, having lunched very well and not on inner tubes, they thought the big offensive had started, as I had lost a chance to give another show. Unfortunately or fortunately for the two deserters we had to move right on up to the Front to give two shows, so we had not time to tell them what we really thought. It's probably just as well because the car would not go without the driver and the piano would not go without Bill—and we could not let our own private war interfere with the real one.

It was still pouring when we left for the Front—we went to a town called Beauval, where we dined with the officers and it looked very much like no show—as all my shows up there were out of doors, but just as we were finishing dinner the rain stopped, as if by magic, so I gave the show on a water-soaked little platform in the little public square which looked rather like a swimming pool.



It takes more than even French rain to cramp the speed of our boys, so they were waiting two thousand strong.

Gave about an hour's show. General K. made a charming and very flattering speech and just as he was saying, "Now, boys, three long ones for Elsie Janis!" the rain started again as if by magic. So the second show had to be postponed until the next day, and we came back to the château. I hate only doing one show in a day—it seems so little—the flies were waiting for us when we came home, and we firmly decided to make a getaway, though the original idea was to make that château our headquarters. Personally while not wishing to pull any heroine stuff I must say I prefer shells now and then to flies all the time. The shells may not get you, but there is no doubt about those French flies.

Word came through that night that the Allies were going strong on all points and the Huns were homeward bound. The next day was Sunday, not that that makes much difference in war—but I woke myself up by giving a tremendous slap to what I thought was a fly, but what turned out to be my nose—As I came to I heard strange music. Suddenly I thought perhaps the flies had worried me to death and I had gone to heaven—voices singing "Onward, Christian soldiers" I heard distinctly, but I was still in the flies retreat—and the

hymn was being sung by about twenty Y.M.C.A. workers who had come from miles around to hold a meeting. We decided that they were right. *Onward* was the idea, whether one happened to be a Christian soldier, or not. So we got busy—and went onward and forward—we lunched at General K.'s headquarters and got more good war news. General J. was also lunching there, and after lunch we went on over to Doullens, where his brigade were stationed. Nice crowd, of fifty-fifty American and British, in the public square as usual.

Afterwards had tea with a flock of "big guys" at General J.'s château—which by the way was well strafed by the Boche a few days later—and one of the officers sent me one of the few things that was not completely "done in," which was a small sign with "Elsie Janis—over here" printed on it, and several shrapnel wounds on its surface. A nice souvenir to have. When I am an old lady I can at least prove that I was a head-liner in Doullens.

After tea we went on to Fruges, where we found they had prepared most alluring quarters for us in what was known as the "rest house"—a place for wandering Generals to repose their weary medals. We were not Generals and we had no medals, but one look at the *rest house* convinced us that the Château Bonance at Abbeville was *napoo* for us. So while I was giving my show we sent the driver back for our things, which were not

even packed. We told him to just bring everything except the flies—he did, making a record trip. The show was at seven and *indoors*, quite a pleasant surprise. Splendid band!

After the performance we dined with Major-General R. and his staff. He was one of the finest types to be seen on any front, and all the officers around him reflected his charm and dignity. One especially nice Colonel really took care of us as if we had been children, and after a very wonderful dinner suggesting anything but war, our Colonel took us back to the rest house and did everything to make us “comfy” except *tuck us in*. Someone is very lucky in being Mrs. Colonel, and I saw her picture; in fact, I have never seen so many wives in evidence as I saw in France. Nearly every officer I met showed me a wife’s picture—and I am proud to say usually his own—that is, if he showed it to me.

We awoke next morning after a really splendid sleep. An orderly came to bring some coffee and with it the great news that the Germans were thrown back across the Marne and that the Americans were after them—some swimming rather than wait for pontoons.

We left Fruges after lunch. It was raining for a change, but cleared off as we drew nearer to our objective, which was a small town in Flanders right back of Ypres—more of a village than a town—



called Watou, pronounced by the Tommies "What-ho"!

That trip was really the most warlike one we had had—camion after camion of troops going up—big guns—little guns—tanks, and instead of an occasional observation balloon I counted no less than fifteen strung along in a row—over the Allied lines, and in the distance the same number of German ones over the Boche lines. They looked so useless—great big "hot dogs" hanging there—but how wonderful they are—and I admit that my idea of a brave man is one of those observers—they go up knowing they can't protect themselves. Three and four airplanes at a time picking on them—Archies barking at them from below and the best they have to look forward to is at least a two or three thousand foot drop with a comic parachute which may or may not "chute." I shall never forget Watou. The —th Division was up there—and I only could have about a thousand men, because the Boche planes were very busy, and if they saw a big crowd that would mean *strafing* at once. There was nothing to hide under in Watou. If there ever were trees there they had all given up the fight—in fact, that entire sector looked rather like certain parts of Kansas—and anyone who has been through the part of Kansas I mean will realize that when the French gave Flanders to the British to look after, they forgot the *Entente Cordiale*.

There was one street in Watou—at least I don't think there was more than one, because nothing missed the street I saw. My platform was in a lot right beside it and when I started my show, everything else started simultaneously. The guns, which had only been murmuring, started to roar—artillery clanked by—big tractors, dragging even bigger guns—and—*tanks!* I had always wanted to see a tank battalion, but they did not help the point of my stories. However, I carried on, dancing a bit when the noise was too much. Finally things died down a bit and I took a long breath and prepared to start again—when all of a sudden, Bang! boom! put, put, put—and right behind me it *seemed*—I looked at the boys who were all doing their best to stick with me—but furtive glances were being cast skywards—not right above me but behind me. Finally I could resist no longer, so I looked. There against the sky was one of our own big sausages with two Boche 'planes flying around it—swooping down on it like vultures—the anti-aircraft guns were turned on them and shells were bursting all around. Black shrapnel from the Boche side and white from ours. I realized that my style was cramped, for all the boys were cross-eyed trying to look at me and at the opposition at the same time. I turned to the boys and said, “I want to see this show, too, so we will have an intermission until they finish their act.” So I sat down on the ground

with the boys, and we watched for about ten minutes—nothing could get that plucky observer out—he stayed right there until our own guns made it so hot for the Boche that they beat it for home.

I then finished my show, which seemed to me to be rather of the small-time order in comparison with the one we had just witnessed. I must admit that I was not sorry not to play a long run at Watou!

From there we went to Houdezeele, which looked even worse than it sounds—and there, wonder of wonders! we found a General without a château—a General, in fact a Major-General—commanding one of the finest divisions of all—and there he was in a tiny little French house in H——. I've just looked on my map to find out the correct way to spell Houdezeele, and I find it is not even on the map, but my map must have been made before the —th Division hit that neck of the woods. I'll bet Houdezeele is on the map now, because those boys sure did make some history.

We dined in the tiny house with General O., who it seemed to me at first was rather young and blue-eyed to be a Major-General—but later on I decided that he was a man who could be most anything he decided to be. During dinner he said, "Now, Mrs. and Miss Janis, we know how hard you have been working, so we are going to try to give you a little



recreation this evening.” And I’ll say they did. We walked over to a large field, where on several trees were nailed most lovely posters of me, saying “Tonight—at seven” drawn by a private in the Army. But certainly a splendid artist in or out of it. There was a stage flat on the ground—and the audience was the same. A tent at the back for the artists to change in. We were escorted up to the front row of the lot where a few officers’ coats made a very dry and comfy place to sit—and then the show started. And some show! they had everything—jazz band, black-face comedians, lovely chorus ladies, and the leading man was a boy we knew well who had been at the Century with me. I could not help thinking how nice and quiet he must have found a real battlefield in comparison with the stage at the Century Theater.

We did love the show—and it was really good—not just because they were soldiers, but because they were soldier actors. One of the finest combinations produced by the War!

When they had finished I started, and I must say I had something to follow—but they were very generous to me and showed no signs of *professional jealousy*! Bless them—they were a fine bunch and I hope some day to play with them again. The “ladies” especially were very *good fellows*—they even offered to lend me their powder puffs.

After their show six lovely fairies disappeared

into the tent and a few minutes later six strong-looking guys in khaki came out.

That night when we got back to Fruges and the rest house, our Colonel was waiting for us with some sandwiches—liquid refreshment and more good war news. So we turned in with very light hearts—and the firm conviction that the —th Division was *ace high*—and that I would ask nothing better than to be a member of that troupe of splendid soldier actors who went about spreading joy right up in the front line trenches—having but one thought, and that one to make things as happy as they could for their fellow-men.

We left Fruges and the charming rest house at ten the following morning. Once more it was pouring—but that did not prevent our nice Colonel from standing out in front of the rest house waving good-by and making us very sorry to leave.

We reached the château of General Mc.—near St. Pol—in time for lunch. On the way we passed battalion after battalion of our boys all marching the way we were going. We waved to them as we always did to any Americans on the road—and they all yelled “Hello, Elsie!” so I suspected they were plodding along in that terrific downpour to see me. When we got there I looked out the window and saw a perfect sea of “slickers” (waterproofs) with smiling wet faces above them. I did not want to eat lunch with them standing, but the General

said there were hundreds more to come—so we lunched and then went out on the verandah of the château—where the band was playing despite the fact that they had to stop every few minutes to pour the water out of their instruments.

There were six thousand men who had marched from miles around and there they stood drenched—but cheering—I started to try to sing, but between the rain and loud claps of thunder which proved that all the scientists with all their high explosives are pikers compared to God's own cannonade, they could not hear me, though I yelled until I was hoarse. So I took the baton from the band-leader, and yelled that they must help me out—and then the fun began! I led them and they sang—everything that they knew—between songs I danced for them—my feet were soaked, my hair was hanging in my eyes—my hat was well on one ear, but I never had so much fun in my life. Every time I would stop for a moment they would all sing, "Wait till the sun shines, Elsie." So I waited, hoping—but alas! in vain. It still poured.

Finally after an hour and a quarter I really had to quit—I was soaked, for though they had a cover over the platform it would have had to be bomb-proof to stop that rain.

I said good-by and turned to tell them how sorry I was—but a clap of thunder spoiled my speech, so I threw kisses instead, and those six thousand regu-



lar guys gave me three cheers that must have made the thunder jealous.

We drove away with them still smiling and singing, "Wait till the sun shines, Elsie!" Oh! how I wanted to wait! but in France you can't tell about the sun, and we had to make Paris that night.

Paris was radiant—the Americans were in Château-Thierry with both feet and the Huns were in such a hurry—the only things that could keep up with them were the airplanes—several of my pet divisions were around Château-Thierry—so I immediately got busy to get permission to go there—which we did after a dash over to London!

## CHAPTER X

### FOLLOWING THE HURRYING HUNS

**D**URING the War all countries seem to be like very large dogs in very large mangers. They don't want you themselves, but they don't want you to go anywhere else--so when we decided to go to England for one week, it required some explanations.

As usual we leapt about from passport bureau to Consulate and finally found ourselves at Le Havre, where the best thing we could get on a Channel boat was one tiny room with two bunks--no sheets on same, and so we just rolled up in blankets and prayed for a smooth crossing--and I must admit that though we have crossed the ocean seven times during the War, I felt the first tremor of submarine terror on that dinky little Channel boat. I found myself looking at the port-hole, which had to be shut tight so that no lights would show--and wondering if I could get my slim but strong hips through that particular sized opening--then I went to sleep and dreamed I could not get my head through. We woke up in Southamp-

ton—one of those nice cheery English mornings—a pea-green fog—which gradually lifted to let a nice steady rain filter through. We disembarked and spent about an hour having papers and baggage examined. We only had one trunk, for which *much thanks*. The British authorities examined everything, even to my vanity case—I don't blame them because if I found two women traveling with as many papers and passes as we had, I would shoot them as spies and tear up the papers. I don't crave having things searched, especially when they go into the sacred domain of the "lip-stick," powder box, etc., but one rather amusing thing happened. In my bag was a slip of paper—a very dirty and suspicious-looking slip of paper—on which was written the following: "Ah-Wah-ta-na-Siam," which is the Siamese National Anthem, as taught to me by a British General in France. If you will sing those words to the tune of "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," you will be able to imagine the feelings of the snoop authority who insisted on knowing what was on that bit of paper.

"Ah-Wah-ta-na-Siam."

He was only doing his duty, poor fellow, but truth will out. By the time they had finished with us and said we could proceed I had lost all desire to do so, and was whole-heartedly regretting the fact that I was not a spy; however, once in the train with the lovely green hills and hedges of Eng-



land unfolding before my eyes, I forgot everything except the fact that I was in England, and that next to going back to America, going back to England is the best thing that can happen to me.

Once in London, and we realized where the *War really was*. In France, if you had money, you could get butter, you could get cream and other "*choses défendus*," but in England Law is Law and, believe me, King or beggar you could not get things without coupons. Three tiny pieces of meat a week as far as I am concerned is teasing the animals, but England was still England—with the theaters going strong, and all of the shows filled with jokes about the hardships of life during the war. Other countries might have wept at the lack of coal, butter, cream, meat, lard and hundreds of other things, but the British, who some short-eared people say have no sense of humor, were still laughing after nearly five years of suffering.

Once in London and comfortably installed in the same corner suite at the Carlton which we have occupied off and on for ten years, we forgot the shortage of food, we were very long on friends—and among them some rather high officials of the Government, so we proceeded to enter a large-sized kick—about being "held up" so strenuously at Southampton. I had an idea that maybe it was on account of my rather German sounding name, so Mother got all ready to shake the family tree—

whose leaves prove that my forefathers with a great amount of foresight landed in America in 1744 and as far as we can find out I am the only member of the family that has ever left the country since. Mother was also ready to wave a couple of British great-grandfathers in the face of anyone who was curious, but before we could do anything the American Army was on the job with an explanation and an apology—and all was well.

It seems that in 1915 we broke the anti-aliens law by taking in and taking out of England my Alsatian maid, and for that we got a bad mark. I asked if they thought I had her concealed in my powder box? which the official at Southampton examined carefully—however, we forgot about it in the excitement of work. We arrived on Saturday, and on Sunday night I played at the Palace for our boys and a few English soldiers. It was a great night. The thrill of being back at my old home, the Palace, was something and the combination of being there and playing for our boys was inspiring. After the show we had supper with a large party of friends, American and English, who almost convinced me that there was a lot of work for me in England, as thousands of Americans were arriving every week en route for France, and I could play here, make money and still be in touch with the A.E.F.

We began to weaken. The next day we went out

to give a show for Yanks—wounded—ill—and stationed at a place that used to be an insane asylum, but was turned over to the Americans—nothing personal about it. A charming and exceedingly well-run hospital, where I found many friends. I gave five shows while in London, and at the end of the week there was no argument left, I had to come back to England, and play—combining business with pleasure. The business being to play at the Palace, the pleasure to continue my work for our boys.

We left England the next Saturday, and I must say our exit was much better than our entrance into England. All the officials at Southampton bowed low—and a charming American officer was sent down there with us to see that we were well taken care of.

At Havre on Sunday I gave one show in the local town hall, and at night went out to Etrétat, where the Americans had taken over a hospital.

There were only about three hundred in the audience—including some extremely pretty nurses—and if they could cure Yanks as well as they cheered me—I'm sure no one stayed very long at Etrétat.

It was now August third, and in Havre the official bulletin announced that the Allies had taken forty thousand German prisoners since July 15th, and the Americans had crossed the Vesle.



The following morning we got up at six in order to catch the early train for Paris. The hotel was facing the quay, and when I went to open the window, what should greet my rather sleepy eyes but the good ship *Yale* which used to run from New York to Boston—laden with American troops—one mass of khaki! Bless them, there they were just getting ready to land and meet the great adventure face to face. I went out on the balcony and wig-wagged to them with a pink kimono. They yelled and waved at me, and I'm sure they thought I was some French "cutie" giving them a welcome.

On arriving in Paris we were greeted by Big Bertha, who was still going strong, despite the fact that she was supposed to have been destroyed at least ten times. Paris was very merry and bright. The British had surprised the Boche in front of Amiens and had taken seventeen thousand prisoners—and the Americans were trying hard to catch up with them—beyond Fère-en-Tardenois. We stayed three days in Paris. I went out to the hospital at Neuilly and sang to the fellows who had made history for America at Château-Thierry. I never saw so many fellows with so many grouches, and all for one reason, because they were out of what they termed "a regular scrap." Their stories were wonderful—and it seemed almost impossible that the Germans could be really so demoralized. One boy said, "Hell, we don't need fighters now—

we need 'sprinters.' ” I gave three shows during the three days—one at the Soldiers' and Sailors' Hut—one at the British-leave Club—and one at the Y.W.C.A. It was the first time I had ever entertained the feminine Young Christians, and a finer lot of girls I never want to see. Château-Thierry was back on the Allied route, so we got our passes and started on the trail of the hurrying Huns.

We went first to La Ferté, where my old friends of the —th Division were resting, after doing wonders. We were put up at Headquarters, a lovely château. I gave a show in the afternoon and the boys had just as much “pep” as if they had not been fighting hard for three weeks. I was broken-hearted to see many replacements and find some of the brave men that I had known and liked two months before—gone out of the cast of the Big Show—their rôles being played by others undoubtedly just as fine and brave, but I am very faithful to my friends and I must admit that after the show I went to my room and had one of the best tear feasts I ever had—then by way of contrast I came down to witness a show that the boys gave for me, and had some of the best laughs I ever had. It was a splendid show—some of the jokes were very much for “gents only” and it was funny to hear the dear boys trying to change them to suit the feminine point of view. That night the Boche came snooping around—but in the air only—the

ones who had feet were showing speed that would have made a Packard twin-six look like a snail.

The next day we left, after lunch, for the Front, which was moving so fast that it was hard to catch. We passed through the world-famous town of Château-Thierry—and no matter what the Germans did to the town in order to get in, the Yanks did twice as much in order to get them out. We saw one bridge or rather the place where one bridge had been before the Yanks saw it, and one of the boys told us that when the Americans got ready to stop the traffic over same, a French officer, almost in tears, said, "It took us eleven years to build it." A Yankee gunner said, "Well, it will take us eleven seconds to ruin it," and proceeded to do it—with one healthy boom!

We went on up, passing camion after camion filled with our men, going into the show. They were absolutely white with dust, bumping along the shell-shot roads—chins well out—and singing "Hail, hail, the gang's all here, so what the h——, etc."

We went through one tiny village that changed hands seven times in one day—it looked it, and I couldn't help wondering why anyone wanted it. We arrived at two up back of the forest of Fère-en-Tardenois, where I gave my show for one of the finest divisions that ever faced the Germans. I have made it a rule not to mention the names or



numbers of divisions, so I won't make an exception, but I may say that the name of the particular gang of heroes suggested a lot of colors. No! you could never guess.

The show was in the center of a battlefield where they had fought—I gave it on a German lorry that they had captured, and the ground was still strewn with helmets, rifles, hand grenades, and other things belonging to Huns that they had killed. They had very thoughtfully taken the Germans or what was left of them away.

The German lorry moaned and squeaked under me as if its morale was like everything else German—and I trembled for fear it might also start running *nach Deutschland!*

I never saw so many shells and aerial torpedoes. It looked as if the Boche must have left more of them behind than all the Allies ever had, but knowing the Hun and his diabolical ways, no one was for taking an aerial torpedo as a souvenir for fear it might turn out to be a headstone in disguise.

I gave an hour's show and afterwards the boys gave me everything from a rifle to a copy of Nietzsche which some Boche had left behind. I suppose he decided it was a bit late to read philosophy.

We could hear the guns only occasionally, and when I remarked about it one of the men said, "If

the wind was only from the east you could hear a concerted chorus of 'Kamerad'!"

We came back to La Ferté by another route, passing through Vaux—which had not one house standing and no walls over three or four feet high. The next morning at eight o'clock we left La Ferté, stopped at St. Dizier for lunch, went on riding through the battlefield of the Marne, where hundreds of little white crosses nestle among the swaying wheat and have done so for four years—brave Frenchmen who have become an unforgettable background to the world's greatest drama.

We arrived at our old homestead, the Hôtel de la Comédie at Toul, at five. Went to our same rooms on the top floor three flights up, changed to my working clothes and went out to Francheville, gave one show there outdoors, and it being Sunday all the villagers turned out and almost shoved the Yanks off the road trying to see the *actress*; from there we went on over to Headquarters of —st Division at Griscourt, dined with General B. and staff—this general is "some guy"—he has the French Legion of Honor and the *Croix de Guerre*—is famous for having led his men over the top at Cantigny. This division has been very busy and has had terrific losses, but the light in their eyes is still one hundred candle-power.

I gave the show on a couple of tables in front of Headquarters, which I must not neglect to re-

mark was not a château. Fine bunch! and just as good singers as they are scrappers.

Home and to bed.

Next day after lunch we went to Nancy—who is looking more shot to pieces than before, but who is flourishing from a monetary point of view. The Yanks have come!

Went through Nancy up towards the front to Headquarters of —d Division. One show at five—the morale of these men is perfectly splendid. They have lost and lost and have hundreds of replacements and still they are “rearin’ to go.”

I never heard fellows sing better—I asked what they wanted to sing, and they yelled “The Pay Roll,” which, for the benefit of those who don’t know that refined ditty, is a *strong favorite* in the A.E.F. and is sung with feeling to the tune of “Glory, glory, hallelujah!”, as follows:

All we do is sign the pay roll,  
All we do is sign the pay roll,  
All we do is sign the pay roll,  
And we never get a G—— d—— cent!

They started to sing it, and when they came to the finish they suddenly realized that there were ladies present and it died away in a sort of moan. So I said, “What’s the big idea? I know that song and if you can sing it to yourselves you can sing it to me, I’m in the A.E.F.” And so I started them



again and they sang it—an unexpurgated rendering that was thrilling! I don't approve of the expression as a password, but I approve of anything that our fellows want to say or do—and you will never know the splendor of the American National *swear* until you hear two thousand huskies who have faced hell and are looking for more sing in unison

“And we never get a G—— d—— cent!”

I'm sure it would never be counted as a regular “swear” by the great Judge of all transgressors.

From there we went to dinner with General L. I'm beginning to think we ought to win the War on *General* principles—they are all such regular *he* men. After dinner we went to Marbach, where the Marines had built a splendid big platform decorated with flags and even a couple of plaster of Paris busts of French heroes. It was getting dark, so they turned a couple of motor searchlights on me—and when those lights hit me, side view, I think the Marines saw more of me than any other soldiers ever saw—but all in a good cause, said I!

They had a band that was beyond description, saxophones and everything—and when they played “Madelon,” the great French marching song, I'm sure I saw the plaster of Paris French heroes swaying in time to the music.

We came back through Nancy just as the Huns started their nightly bombing fest—and, believe me, the Cadillac broke all records from Nancy to Toul.

We got home safely, climbed wearily upstairs, and I was sitting thanking St. Somebody who protects us from bombs for seeing us through when all of a sudden the lights went out and the *sirène* started to moan.

Did I ever say I had been in air raids in Paris? Well, I take it back. No one has ever been in a real raid until they have been in one in a little French town that is so old that it's ready to fall from sheer fatigue. We lit candles and waited, but not long. A church bell began to toll drearily, which meant that the Germans were over the town. I figured it out that the church bell tolled to prove that one man in town was brave enough to stay aboveground because the rush for the caves by the French was something that must be seen to be believed. I learned later that the man who tolled the bell was also underground. Some rope!

Of course it is the law, and any one of the villagers found out collecting bombs after the church bell rings gets fined if he lives.

Mother was all for seeing the show, so we put out the candles and stepped out onto the balcony, and there they were flying low enough to place a bomb on your eyebrow with ease.

The defenses of Toul are nil—because some “boob” started the story that there was a friendly arrangement by which Toul would not be bombed. Twenty-six bombs was the German idea of friendliness—and every one that fell made Toul sit up and “shake the shimmy.” I let Mother see the airplanes, but when I saw that the Toul defenses consisted of a couple of machine guns on the roofs of two trembling houses I led her gently but firmly indoors and downstairs into a pitch-dark hall—where the only drunken Yank I ever met in France was making more noise than all the bombs.

So up we went again.

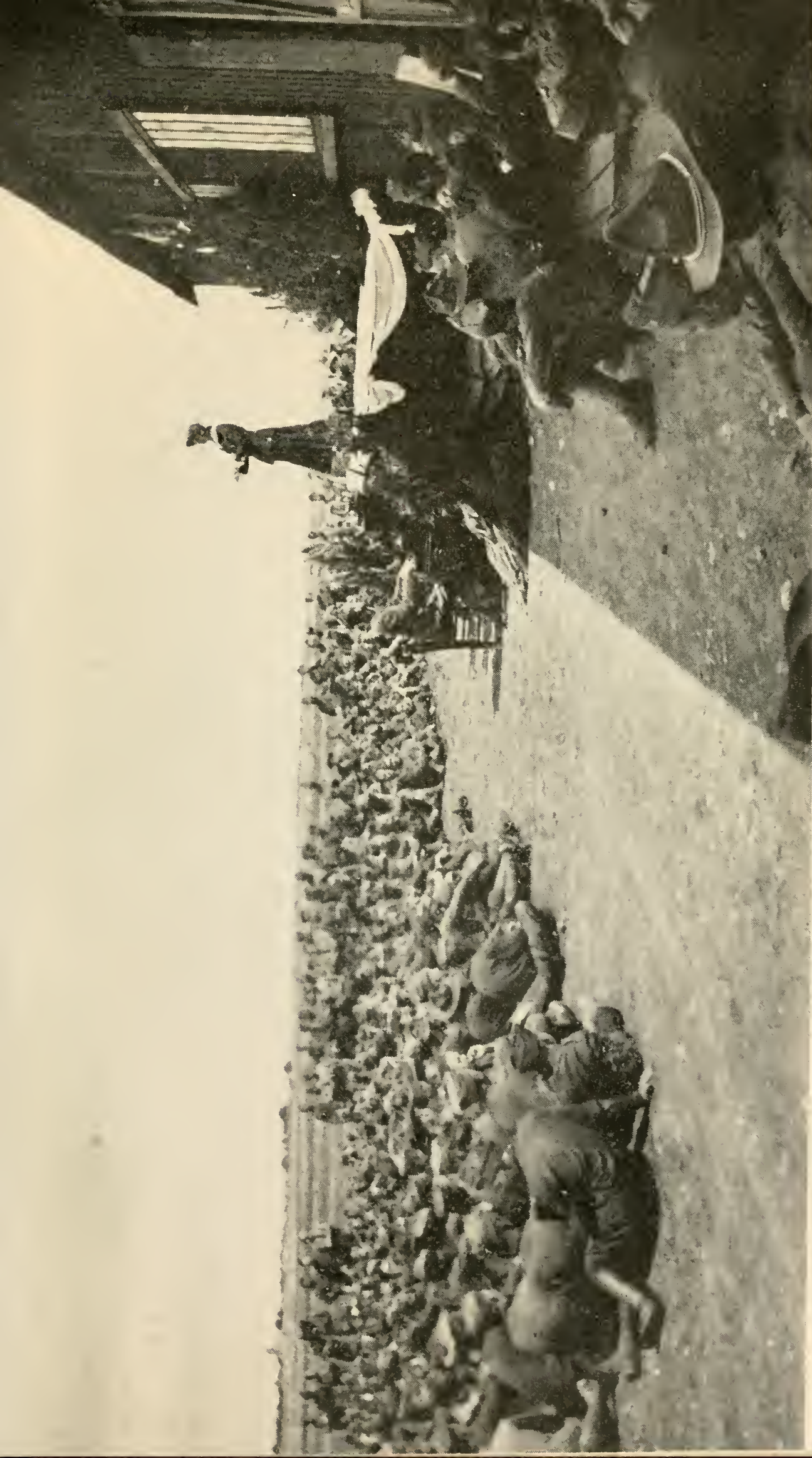
Suddenly silence—sighs of relief—exit church bell—enter lights. All clear! Sighs of relief from mother and child—back to the dressing-table, hair brush in one hand, kid curlers clasped between rather shaky thumb and forefinger—dash, dot, dash, dot—lights out—*sirène*—church bell—They’re in again—that they should raid was natural, but that they should play a return date was *rude*. The two raids lasted an hour and ten minutes by the clock and two years and a half in my mind. They did quite a lot of material damage, but killed no one—which was extraordinary and proves the French theory that a bird in the cave is worth two in the street.

We woke the next morning feeling not a day more than a hundred and eight apiece, and left



Toul to bask in all the German friendship she wanted.

At noon we arrived at Sommeilles, and after seeing the place I was quite convinced that there is something in the superstition about thirteen, because the men that were there and had been there for months were the Thirteenth Engineers. They had written me asking me to come, and they certainly were the most grateful bunch I ever played for. We lunched with them and then gave the show. Only half of them had the misfortune to be sunk there, so after lunch we went on over to the other half at a place called Fleury, which despite its pretty name only strengthened my opinion about thirteen. Fleury was right back of Verdun, and as our show was scheduled for after dinner we had an hour or so. And we did the only bit of sightseeing that we did while in France—we got passes and went up to see Verdun. I only hope that after the war the French will keep that glorious monument intact for the benefit of touring Americans, because Verdun is really a picturesque ruin—with its charming old walls and its buildings not entirely demolished, but not one as far as we could see had been missed. The town was absolutely deserted except for a few fat *poilus* who were swimming and paddling about in the little river which was flowing peacefully along at the foot of the grand citadel. I should not have known



I GAVE THE SHOW ON A COUPLE OF TABLES IN FRONT OF HEADQUARTERS





that they were fat but for the fact that just as we drove up to the citadel we heard Boche 'planes overhead, and we all rushed to see what was doing! Two lovely silver 'planes apparently en route for heaven got well up above an observation balloon and dove on it simultaneously. The observer dropped gracefully out in a parachute—the anti-aircraft guns barked madly—the Boches ran home—but the balloon remained silhouetted against the summer sky. Evidently the Germans flew better than they shot. The observer came slowly down and landed on the top of a tree—the *poilus*, who had all emerged from the river to see the show (that's how I knew they were fat), all went back to their swimming, and Verdun slept again—I asked one fat *poilu*, the only one who was wearing anything but the river, if the Boche came over often. He said No! that it was a great treat for them, as nothing exciting ever happened in Verdun now! Poor long-suffering town! It has certainly earned a bit of peace.

We came back to Fleury—dined and gave the show. For the first time, I co-starred, as there was a splendid quartette of Young Christians who helped me out a lot. We left right after my part of the entertainment and started for Paris. Everyone said we would never make it that night—but they did not know the Cadillac. We arrived in Paris at one in the morning, having traveled along

without any lights at all—over the most terrible roads and with a terrible battle going on. The sky was ablaze with Very lights, star-shells, etc. As we drew nearer to Paris it all faded away like a dream, and I suddenly realized with a heavy heart that I had perhaps seen my last show for some time—as we were to leave France almost immediately.

The next day the news about the Yanks was so splendid that I sent a telegram to the “Boss General” saying “Congratulations on your great show—sorry I am not in the cast—hope to join the company in Berlin.” And I really meant it.

My idea was to go to England for three or four months, grab as much money as the income tax collectors would allow and go back to the Big Show!

## CHAPTER XI

### THE A.E.F. IN ENGLAND

SOMEONE said once that my heart was like an artichoke, a leaf for everyone. Well, if that is true, said artichoke was certainly left in France for our boys to do with as they liked, even to playing "She loves me—She loves me not" with the leaves. When we got back to England and I knew that I had to start playing for money instead of love I had no interest in life, but after two weeks there I realized that it was to be a happy combination of love and money, because there were hundreds of Yanks in England and thousands passing through every day en route to France, so I began to cheer up. The show was called "Hullo, America!" and I filled it full of American songs, and myself personally blew off a lot of my war steam in a song which I wrote and sang called "When I Take My Jazz Band to the Fatherland." This is the chorus:

Oh, say can you see  
What's going to happen in the streets of Berlin,  
Over there, Over there, Over there?



We're going to jazz 'em, jazz 'em up for fair;  
Instead of sitting drinking Bock,  
They're going to learn to eagle rock,  
Every Fritz and Herman  
Will have to jazz in German.  
Take it from me,  
We're going to say,  
"Now, here's your chance, dance—  
'Way down South in the Land of Cotton!"  
Wacht am Rhein  
Will be forgotten  
When I take my jazz band to the Fatherland.

That song became the talk of London, and the word "jazz," which was new to the British, became a household necessity. Papers wrote editorials about it, duchesses discussed it, bus girls buzzed about it, and dancing teachers reaped the harvest by insisting that "jazz" was a dance, then proceeded to teach the innocent but inquiring English the "jazz roll," something we never saw or tried to do, an acrobatic atrocity; then preachers started to preach about the immorality of this dance, and of course America had to take the blame. I spent most of my time explaining that jazz was a form of music and not a dance; but what chance had I with about a hundred dancing teachers, raking in the first money they had raked since 1914, saying I was mistaken? It ended by several English managers bringing over several real jazz bands, and the Brit-

ish are still gasping. They say the ear specialists of London are going to present me with a medal for introducing jazz to London.

“Hullo, America!” was about the biggest success I’ve ever had, and I was of course delighted, but my real joy was that on Sunday I gave regular shows for regular roughneck Yanks, and on the days when we had no matinees I went to the hospitals, where I found my own boys, who when I appeared in the wards would yell “Hello! Elsie, remember Houdezeele?”, or “I saw you up in Belgium.” That sent me into the theater at night with speed enough to stagger Ralph de Palma. On Sundays Sir Alfred Butt and the committee who helped amuse our boys in London were still giving wonderful shows at the Palace. One Sunday night General B., who was the big boss of the A.E.F. in England and who made anything I wanted to do for the boys possible, had a real jazz band of chocolate hue brought up to London, and I sang my song about taking my jazz band to the Fatherland, and then led them out. Oh! boy, what a night! I went wild leading them. It was the first band I had led since leaving France, and in my mind I was back plodding along a dusty French road. We certainly jarred the roof of the Palace even if we couldn’t blow it off. After the show they marched down the streets playing “Over There” as if they were walking down the Unter den Linden. If you have never

been in London on Sunday; if you don't know that Philadelphia on Sunday is a wide-open mining-town compared to London on that same day, then you will never understand the super-joy of seeing and *hearing* fifty black-faced, white-hearted sons of Southern salubrity hoofing it down Shaftesbury Avenue, London, England, Sunday night and getting away with it; but then between the Colonial troops and the Yanks who were blowing in and out of poor old London on leave, that dignified and lovely city was rather like Carrie Nation might have been in the act of mixing a Clover Club cocktail—baffled.

On leaving France I had written a letter to the A.E.F. in France which was published in that wonderful paper the "Stars and Stripes," and I told the fellows to keep up the good work while I went to get some money in England and that we would be back in the spring; that if they wanted anything that I could get for them, to write to me, so that all the time I was in England I ran opposition to the Quartermaster Corps. They wrote to me for everything from dice to evening gowns, and they got them. The evening gowns were for the "leading ladies" in their shows. I sent out nine altogether, and finally one night when I wanted to "step out" to a party I had to borrow one of my theater gowns, but all in a good cause. The "leading ladies" must be clothed at the Front, even



though the ones at home are not clothed at the front or the back.

If it had not been for the A.E.F. in England, we would surely have lost what little flesh still remained on our somewhat weary bones. As it was, we got quite a lot of forbidden fruit, such as sugar, jam, Uneeda biscuits, etc. One friend of ours, Captain S., used to arrive about once a week looking like Santa Claus laden with goodies which our boys in the camps where I was working would send to us. They took turns going without sugar for a day, in order to collect enough to send up to Elsie and Mother. Anything I may have done for them was certainly more than repaid by that little thought alone.

In one part of "Hullo, America!" I did a specialty in which I told some of my war stories and sang "Give me the moonlight, give me the boy, and leave the rest to me"; then sang it as the different soldiers would sing it. I am going to quote three of them, as I've so many requests from the boys for the words. The original song was like this:

Give me the moonlight,  
Give me the boy,  
And leave the rest to me;  
Give me a bench for two,  
Where we can bill and coo,  
And no one can see;  
Give me a shady nook,

## THE BIG SHOW

Give me a babbling brook  
In close proximity;  
It's a very ancient game,  
But it always works the same.  
Give me the moonlight,  
Give me the boy,  
And leave the rest to me.

Then followed the way the German aviators would  
sing it:

Give me the moonlight,  
Give me some bombs,  
And leave the rest to me;  
Give me a church or two,  
A hospital will do,  
*Oder vielleicht* a nursery;  
Give me a mother there,  
Hearing her baby's prayer,  
Und I will laugh with glee;  
There's no military loss,  
But I get the iron cross.  
So give me the moonlight,  
Give me some bombs,  
Und leave the rest to me.  
Boom! Boom!

The way the colored soldier would sing it:

Gib me de moonlight,  
Show me de hen,  
And leave de rest to me;  
Gib me a coop or two,

Where little chickens bill and coo,  
And nobody can see;  
Gib me a frying pan,  
I fry like no man can,  
O Lordy! for one fricassee.  
It's a very easy game,  
'Cause dese French chickens is tame.  
Gib me de moonlight,  
Show me de hen,  
And leave de rest to me.

Unless you have seen the Yanks in France and have witnessed the triumph of "American Arms" you can't imagine how tame those French "chickens" were. As our boys used to say—*Ah, oui!!!*

After about two months in London I was getting quite contented. I met the boys sometimes down at different camps, just when they had arrived from home and were on their way to the Big Show. I gave them the same sort of shows that I gave in France and always ended up by telling them that I would see them "over there" in the early spring, and I meant it, because when we left France the most optimistic of optimists said the War would not end before spring, and I was living or rather existing with the idea of getting back to my gang and to see the finish. Then all of a sudden things began to happen in France; word came that the Germans were "*kaput*." We had heard that before, and all England was incredulous. A few days later—"The Germans Ask for Armistice!" "Don't kid



us," we said in England; "there is a catch in it"—but we were wrong. On Saturday, November 9th, the world knew that armistice would be signed. On Monday, and on Sunday, November 10th, I made my usual trip to a camp; this time to Winchester, where I sang for three thousand Yanks who had just arrived from home on an influenza-laden ship. Some of the poor boys never even reached Southampton. They had all the work and struggles of rehearsing for the Big Show and never got to play their parts. That to me was the saddest thing in the whole War. Those boys at Winchester on Armistice Sunday never saw France, and of all the shows I ever gave, that one was the most difficult. I'll take shell-fire, bombs or even gas rather than face a battery of disappointed young faces. I knew that if I talked about my experiences in France they would feel it, and I could not say "when you get over there," because in my heart I knew they would never know the joys of sleeping in billets where chickens, pigs and goats tell you to "move over"; of having six or seven tiny French kids hanging on their necks, legs and arms, all crying "*Vivent les Américains!*"; to drink a glass of delicious ink known as *Vin Rouge*, and served by a bright-eyed, black-haired Madelon who still blushes when he "chucks" her under her pretty chin, despite the fact that at least four hundred thousand eight hundred and forty-two soldiers have

given her the same sort of "chuck" under that same pretty chin. Oh! I did feel sorry for those boys, but we got along somehow, and they had a good band which played just as if it was leading them into battle, but I went back to London thoroughly depressed.

All the time we had been in London I had been longing for an air raid; that sounds like bravado in its most advanced stage, but I really longed to see the British public in a raid. I had heard how they never moved in the theater, how the play went on even though the dialogue was punctuated by bombs, and I wanted a chance to show them that I "belonged," as it were. So as the fall moon grew to look like a snow-covered pumpkin I waited and hoped, but all in vain. On the morning of the 11th of November I was dreaming that I was standing on the Palace stage singing "Give me the moonlight, give me the boy, etc."; bombs were falling on all sides and the audience was so still it seemed to be asleep. I was making heroic efforts to appear calm, while inside of me my "tummy" was making vain attempts to come up for air. *Boom!* went a bomb rather faintly, and I opened one eye; *BOOM!* again, stronger this time—I opened the other eye. *BOOM!* once more, and then I realized that those booms meant the end of all air raids, they were the signal to tell London that the Armistice was signed. At that moment London went mad. Every-

one who reads this was naturally somewhere at that time, and of course people went mad wherever that somewhere happened to be, but there is something extraordinary about English people going mad. We Americans or the Latins have not so far to go, but for the British it is some trip, and they made it. The earth suddenly opened and millions of human ants swarmed the streets, buildings, trams, and even flagpoles. From the fourth floor of the Carlton where we lived we hung out of the windows dazed. I could not yell, I was numb. Those ants had horns, whistles, flags, balloons. I counted fifteen people clinging to one taxi. Airplanes appeared from nowhere, and all but came down to pick up passengers. I closed the window and tried to shut it all out. It seemed so unbelievable! Millions of people praying for one thing for five endless years,—suddenly that prayer is answered, and they show their gratitude by blowing tin horns and breaking their fellow creatures' arms and legs. Why when those booms boomed did we not all fall on our knees in awe and unspeakable gratitude, as the heathens used to do when miracles were performed? Ah! but we are not heathens, we are civilized and civilization knows how to ask but not how to receive. Really, Miss Janis, you had better throw your beard over your shoulders before it trips you, besides perhaps one can say a little prayer and blow a horn at the same time—who



knows? Anyway, I found Mother in her room weeping gratefully and silently. I went into mine and wept gratefully, but not silently; the only thing I can do silently is sleep. Up to time of going to press there is no one who can deny that somewhat boastful assertion. After we both wept our weeps, I went to the piano and we both sang a little hymn which I learned as a kiddie when Mother taught Sunday school, long before I went wrong, for be it understood in those days anyone who went on the stage went wrong—at least until they were a success. Someone said, “Two wrongs don’t make a right, but two successes will go a long way towards righting a wrong.” The hymn of my childhood was evidently written with forethought, as it seemed to fit the situation:

Peace, Peace, Sweet Peace,  
Wonderful gift from above,  
Wonderful, wonderful Peace,  
Sweet Peace, the gift of God’s love.

That night at the theater the audience was strangely well-behaved. I heard great tales of rough-housing in other theaters, but the Palace audience is traditionally *comme il faut*, which only makes my success there even more surprising. After the theater that night we were invited to at least six joy parties. We looked in at the Ritz,

where people were yelling, lights were full up, and supper and liquids were in evidence for the first time in four years. We wanted to be gay, but we could not make the grade, so we sneaked out a back door through a plethora of drunken waiters and went home. As we sat there alone, listening to the din and roar of peace, which sounded much more like war than war itself, Mother looked at me, and I looked at Mother; then, as is our custom, we "split" a little thought between us, and we drank a silent toast to the dear men who had gone, but not in vain.

From that time on, things were not quite the same to me; something seemed to have snapped somewhere in the region of where my heart would have been if I had not left it in France. I still went to hospitals and camps, still sang of taking my jazz band to the Fatherland, but not with the same vim, because I knew that the biggest thing in my life had gone out of it, never again would I sing to and cheer two or three thousand of our wonderful boys, and send them from me singing into the unknown. I was glad that their battles were over, but I was selfish enough to be sorry that my work which gave me such indescribable and infinite joy was ended.

London was herself again, food was still scarce, but people smiled and looked with joy ahead a few months to the time when, after the shadow of war

had lifted, they would go forth hands outstretched into the light and grasp a pound of butter.

Great things happened, some of the stars of the Big War honored us. The glorious old man of France, Clemenceau, came, and London went mad; President Wilson came, and London was still mad—not at the President. Haig came; Pershing was billed, but canceled his appearance because the Germans were slow about signing their peace contracts. Hundreds and thousands began to get London leave; Yanks could be seen standing in front of Westminster Abbey with that “you ought to see the Woolworth Building expression.” The Palace, if I may say so without bragging, was the first place most of our boys went; in fact, one of my friends told me that he got about ten telegrams a day from fellows in France and Germany saying “Coming on leave; get me seats to see Elsie Janis, and a place to sleep.” Maybe I was not all “stuck up.” I left word at the stage door that any man in U. S. uniform was to come right up and no questions asked. And they came laden with souvenirs; they brought everything from Germany but the Rhine. General O. came, and I took him out to the big hospital where about four hundred of his own men were still regretting the fact that they would not be able to get even. He co-starred with me, as he was some yarn spinner; the men were crazy about him. In the field a General is a General, but in a



hospital he is only a human being, and this one was all that, with emphasis on the *human*. Speaking of humans and *he men*, I can't resist being personal just for a minute and saying that we Americans had two of the finest examples of both representing us in London that were ever known, Admiral S. and General B. Both did more to cement the friendship of England and America than will ever be known. They were not the bragging, America-won-the-war kind; they gave credit and took it, and made friends right and left and straight ahead. I don't say this because they were both nice to us, and wrote me charming letters thanking me for my work, but because I snooped about and heard what people thought of them—a couple of live wires without any *short circuits*.

In my life I've met quite a lot of important personages, so I don't feel inclined to brag, but I must say that during our stay in England this time we were sort of thick with Royalty; our maid, Nancy, had an aunt who had a husband who was second coachman to the King, and maybe you think we were not *au courant* with Court circles, but you are wrong; we even knew that Mrs. Wilson's apartment in the Buckingham Palace was redecorated for her, in mauve, before she herself knew it. Then I had a chance to find out a little bit about Queens on my own—principally that they are just regular women, and don't wear their crowns under those





A JAZZ BAND OF CHOCOLATE HUE





hats that look as if there was something under them beside ideas. One day I strolled into the matinee a bit later than usual, and was told by a panting page boy that "Royalty had come," and so they had—Queen Mary, Queen Alexandra, her sister, Queen of Norway, the Princess Royal, Princess Victoria, Princess Maud, and little Prince Olaf. Between the acts the manager came and said that they wanted to see me in the Royal box. I said that I could not go because I had a quick change; he said, "But you must go, we will hold the curtain"; and so with nothing on but a lavender kimono, and very little of that, and with my Mary Pickfords flying all over the place, I breezed up to that box of Queens. I had heard something about people having to bow before them, but I had decided to pretend I did not know it, because if I had ever taken a bow in that kimono, Prince Olaf would have been embarrassed, so I went into the little room at the back of the box, holding the kimono with one hand and the curls with the other, and there they stood, all lined up with hands outstretched. Royalties have evidently learned from American Missions they have met that to visiting Congressmen and other important visitors the hand-shake is a sign of friendship, so I did not want them to think I was not as important as a Congressman, and I went along that line of Queens shaking hands and asking them how they

were? Silly when I knew they were royal, and in books royal folks are never healthy. As I came back to Queen Alexandra, who is perfectly adorable, and despite the fact that people say she has her face enameled has the most gorgeous honest-to-God smile that ever put anyone at ease, pulled one of my curls, and said: "Why, they don't come off, do they?" I murmured something to the effect that if they would come off for anyone they would for her, and edged nearer the door. "I must get ready for the next act," I said, looking at them all. They said, of course they understood, and so I went over and shook hands again with Queen Alexandra just because I liked her, and with a "thanks, your Majesty" I did a Charlie Chaplin out of the door. Someone told me afterwards I should not have said "your Majesty," but should have said "M'am." How should I know?—I don't claim to be Palace-broken, and anyway the logical abbreviation for Majesty should be Mag.

The time was drawing near for us to go home now, and I began to pant at the prospect. "Hullo, America!" had never had an empty seat, and of course everyone said I was crazy to leave, but we had been away a year and five months, and that's entirely too long to stay away from home, unless you are fighting to protect that same home, so we began to prepare. I had letters asking me to come up to the boys in Germany, but my life in France

had been so wonderful that I could not bear the thought of just going around and comfortably giving shows, and then anyway the boys who came on leave told me they had everything that they wanted that side of the Atlantic, so we got ready to sail, and had a splendid plan to sail from Brest, France, after a couple of days in Paris, where I would give two shows for the men on Paris leave. The *Rotterdam*, which we were to sail on, was to go to Plymouth and then to Brest, so we rushed about, got in touch with Paris, arranged for two shows, and as many as I could give at Brest. I played as long as I could at the Palace, closed on Wednesday, got ready to go to Paris on Saturday and sail from Brest the following Wednesday. On Saturday at four (the train left at seven) U. S. Headquarters called me up to say that they had just been notified that the *Rotterdam* had gone to Brest first and would come to Plymouth Tuesday!! There was nothing to do; I could not get over to Paris and back, and we could not get down to Brest in time. We were both too tired to swear, even if it was one of our indoor sports, so we just "sat and sat" from Saturday until Wednesday, when we went to Plymouth. A very sad ending to a glorious adventure. I had so wanted to go back to France if only for three days, but we were going home, which is one of the hardest things to accomplish in these days, for even if the steamship companies will allow



you to sail, the American passport bureau have a right to resent your coming home and leaving them to ask questions. They were wonderful to us and they did not even question why we were coming home. So this takes us to Plymouth, where we go out in a tender to the *Rotterdam*, and as we approach the enormous neutral sea palace what do we see—hanging over the rails—Yanks! Oh! joy! Oh rapture! not one or two, but hundreds of them, and what are they yelling—“Hello, Elsie! How’s dear old London?” *Fini la guerre!* Yes, *la guerre est fini*, but the spirit that helped to finish it was hanging over the rails of the ship, and I was happy. After all, I was to finish as I began, with the A.E.F., three Generals, three hundred officers and twenty-two hundred troops on board.

Hip! hip! hooray! we were back in the Big Show after all and homeward bound.

## CHAPTER XII

### HOME AGAIN!

WHEN we sailed from Plymouth on the good ship *Rotterdam* homeward bound, my emotions were of the rainbow variety. I had left probably the biggest success of my life when I left the Palace Theater, London—left it flat, in the height of its existence. I can't say that I was broken-hearted over that, because I have always been an apostle of George M. Cohan's in his theory of going while the going's good, and even if I had been nothing in Europe, not even the Army of Occupation could have held us there, because we had that commonplace disease which claimed more victims in France than the war and influenza combined, homesickness. We were the exact antithesis of the colored soldier who was one of a crowd of his fellow-fighters when an Army chaplain, talking to them, said, "Now, just remember, boys, no matter what happens, you are all right, and Heaven is your home."

Just then a shell knocked part of the roof off. Our colored friend started to run.

“What’s the matter, Mose?” said the chaplain.  
“You are all right.”

Mose didn’t stop, but he yelled over his shoulder:  
“D-d-dat’s all right, Chaplain, I know Heaven is ma home, but I ain’t homesick.”

He was not, but we were, and so when we boarded the *Rotterdam* it did not seem possible we could endure nine or ten days before we really got home. I was delighted to be with troops again, but I thought, one can’t spend all day and all night with twenty-two hundred Yanks, no matter how unconventional they may hope they are. How could I drag through those days?

Did I drag? No, I flew! About two hours off the coast of England I met a T.A.G. (terribly attractive General), the one who had shown the French what to do with railroads in France; the one who had won a lot of the battles of life before he went to France, and who put the final crown of laurels on his nice level head “over there,” saying nothing of the Légion d’Honneur, English Order of the Bath, and the best decoration America could give him, on his chest. I could write an entire book about this big man and his big doings, but I have not been asked to write a book to be entitled “Generals I Have Loved.” However, if you met this man, you would wonder why they did not ask him to go to Russia, for if he did, inside of two weeks he would have all the Bolshevists working on the rail-



road for nothing, except perhaps for an occasional smile, the kind he has a copyright on.

Twelve hours out I had met two more T.A.G.'s; two days out I had met at least two hundred and eighty-nine of the three hundred officers on board. Three days out I had met the other eleven. Four days, and I gave a show for a thousand of the boys in second-class. Five days, and I gave another for the rest; six, I gave a show for the T.A.G.'s, officers, and also-rans, and by the time we reached Sandy Hook I was trying to figure out how I could lure the Dutch captain of the *Rotterdam* into saying that he had left his anchor in Holland, or dropped his neutrality in the Channel, and must make the trip all over again. We really did have a most wonderful voyage.

When I sang for the enlisted men, I sang them a little song that I had written called "We're Going Home," which went like this:

We're going home,  
And what about this prohibition,  
When we get back home?  
It's a shame—who's to blame?  
Where's the liberty?  
Where's the land that's free?  
While we went to can the Kaiser,  
They have taken away Budweiser;  
But we're going home,  
And ask them, "What's the big idea?"  
Oh! yes, we're going home,

It's the truth, solemn truth,  
We got the Germans' goat,  
And now we want to vote,  
Because we're going home.

Reading this, one might think I was a champion long-distance drinker, but I'm not, really; only I have talked to so many of the boys on the subject, and knew that little song hit the nail on the head for them. I've been with them enough and have seen them do enough great things to think that they ought to have whatever they want, so I say if the boys say "Prohibition!" let's have it, and smile. If the boys say "We want beer!" I say, let's have beer, even if I have to lead a nice little poison gas bomb into the Senate myself.

We floated into Quarantine about six in the evening, and then began the endless chain of arguments about just what were the bits of land we could see. I have crossed the ocean some twenty times, and I have never yet approached New York without someone coming up and pointing out the points of interest on the welcoming shores. Personally, the only one I ever recognized is Coney Island, and this time I was all for jumping off and swimming ashore, and then I decided that after living through France and everything, drowning would be somewhat banal, and anyway the T.A.G. would not jump with me, so I went to dinner instead.

We had to remain on board that night. We could see New York, but New York could not see us, so we had a party, and I am surprised that New York did not at least hear us. In the morning at five-thirty, I who never wake up without a certain amount of gentle but firm persuasion bounded from the bunk to the port-hole in one leap. We were moving up that sacred river. Every time I sail away from America, I think that the next time I come home I won't look at the sky-line of New York, because I get so tired of being eternally astounded. Each time I think, Next time Miss Liberty will leave me cold. She is not particularly attractive. She's not in style; she doesn't even smile and say "Glad you're back," and yet the sight of her is the cue for a creeping barrage of tears from all regular Americans.

We approached the dock. It had to be Hoboken, just to take a bit of the joy out of life. The Holland-American ships have to land at the former German docks. That's what they get for being neutral; they have to land in Hoboken. I stood on deck, thinking how wonderful even that garden spot was looking, when all at once I heard a band playing "Ja Da"—that's a popular tune, not a college yell—and I said to myself:

"How wonderful that is for someone, having a band meet them at six-thirty. They (the band) must have slept with their instruments."



A soldier came running up and said, "Have you seen it?" Another said, "Do you hear it? That's for you." I thought, Poor dears! the sight of Hoboken has turned their war-weary brains; I will humor them. So I ran with them to the other side of the ship, and there, big as life, was the father of all tugboats, with two bands, one fore and one aft, and big signs all over it, "Welcome—Elsie Janis!" That was the first time I even dreamed that America was going to make a heroine of me. I was completely knocked out; that tug was a Jack Dempsey to me. Mother came up, and of course we cried. Our tears seem to have lost their route during the War, because when we are sad, we smile, and when we are happy, we cry; the tear ducks must have struck the wrong pond.

That tug with "Welcome!" on it was the beginning of one long series of pleasant surprises, for I am quite sincere when I say that when I was working—or, rather, playing for the boys "over there," it never occurred to me that I was doing anything very splendid. It hasn't soaked through my rather hard but not enlarged head yet. If I were a doughboy, like thousands I've seen, who with his own hands, and sometimes with empty hands, had done in one, two, or more Germans, then I could expect a welcome, especially as the only reward lots of them got was their own pride, and that alone had to make up for the loss of eyes,

or arms, or legs, but what I did seemed so perfectly natural to me, and to Mother. Perhaps it was because we had had a taste of the joy of cheering and being with British soldiers in nineteen-fourteen and fifteen that made it seem just what we had been longing for, only even more gratifying, because our boys were so far from home. However, the fact remains that I have been and am still being treated like a heroine, and I surely do love it.

The ship docked, and then started the big battle for landing permits. Mother and I stood there, wondering if we would make Tarrytown by night. All three of the T.A.G.'s were sent for by Uncle Sam to be taken off extra special quick and avoid the mob. I was just beginning to think that the Army was much too full of class distinction, when an angelic young man in uniform with an official-looking band on his arm stepped up and said:

"Miss Janis, if you and your mother will get all your things together, I will take you ashore at once."

Was I in the A.E.F.? *I'll say so.* We filed out, and the biggest joy of all was that we left the three T.A.G.'s still talking about landing "at once." We even went through the customs smiling though thoroughly examined. They asked me if I had anything to declare. I said:

"Yes—my undying devotion to the A.E.F."

My dear friends met us; you may know they were dear if they were there. We docked at seventy-three. Usually, when we land in America, the kindly newspaper men ask me my plans for the future—what play I am going to play and so on—but this time they seemed to know plays were not on my mind, and they all asked me about my splendid work in France. Even the newspapers believed I was a heroine. I was beginning to get weak in my convictions. Suppose I should be—how grand! We went to the hotel where we always descend (as we say in France) when in the city. Everyone there welcomed us. Two or three of the waiters told me of how they had just missed me in France; I congratulated them.

After lunch we started for Tarrytown in the car. Though all America is home, sweet home, Tarrytown-on-ye-Hudson is where we have put about all of our hard-earned dollars, in the Manor House, built in 1683, and looking its full age—at least its shape does. Our house being in upper New York, of course George Washington stayed there. I really think he must have been playing one-night stands from the number of places he stopped, but our house really was on his route. He fell in love with Mary Phillipse who lived there, and being young he got very rash and asked her to marry him. He was only a lieutenant, and she, being more rash, refused him, poor girl! She could not tell from his love-making



that he was going to be President. Today the girls can tell from a handshake how much income tax a man pays. However, when G. W. became a T.A.G. he came back and dispossessed Mary and her family and had her husband put in the klink. They called it a dungeon in those days—"dungeon or klink, it's all the same think." Anyway, that's what G. W. did. There I go, writing another book. Stick to your own history, Miss Heroine.

When we reached Ardsley, which is a little nearer to New York City than Tarrytown, we suddenly heard a siren blow. For a moment I thought there must be an air raid, and then I saw them, all the boys from the Tarrytown Fire Brigade on their big hook and ladder, which goes so fast and thrills me so that I have often been tempted to start a fire at the Manor House just to see them arrive. Even when I saw them, I was looking for the fire. They'd come, not to put us out, but to escort us in. So away they went ahead of us, blowing, ringing, yelling, and our old Buick trailing along like a chaperon at the Yale Prom. As we rode down the river road, usually so stately and justly proud of the fact that really great men of history had strolled contentedly beneath its huge trees, I almost burst with pride. People rushed out and waved flags. I learned afterward that it had been arranged beforehand that the siren was the signal of our arrival.

We drew up to the Manor House, and there we found about four hundred men, women and children with flags, flowers and even tears to welcome us. If I were capable of describing my feelings on paper, I should never have to act again; I could go in for high-class literature—but I can't. Mother and I simply wilted. Little children with sweet little faces washed to a shining point presented us with flowers. Mothers whose boys had seen me in France shook my hand. The siren gave an angry scream, just to remind us it was still on the job.

I turned to the intrepid one who was running that monster and said, "That's some fine machine." He said, "Come for a ride."

So I leaped over about a hundred kids on to the front seat, and away we went, all through the streets of sweet, peaceful old Tarrytown. Shades of Washington Irving and Ichabod Crane, but we did move! That was the first time I ever for a moment admitted that I have some heroic instincts. I've played under shell-fire; I've worn a gas mask and danced; I've crossed the ocean seven times during the War; I've faced regiments of "cooties" without a tremor; but to ride, standing bolt upright, fifty miles an hour on a hook and ladder, around curves that were made for baby carriages, with nothing to hold on to but my reputation, was brave, and I admit it. I don't remember much

except that we did not hit anything for the simple reason that everything ran like mad.

When we got back I thought my brain had given way under the exquisite speed, for there in my front yard I saw khaki, and lots of it. About fifty of our boys from a hospital nearby had come to say hello. They were boys I had known in France, and there was a first-class revival meeting held right on the lawn under the same trees where George Washington tried to make Mary Phillipse listen to reason. Finally I thanked them all, and they faded away like a dream.

Will there ever be such times again, I wonder? A hundred years from now, what will be happening under those wonderful, wise old trees? Well, we can't go into that, and I, for one, don't want to. I would not have missed living in our days for a front-row seat in Heaven.

Home again! We were there. I pinched myself into the realization of that glorious fact, and then I sat down and thought. If home meant to me as much as it did, with lots of loving and charming friends in Europe, what must it mean to our boys!—some with wives that they hardly knew, some with little babies that they had never seen, some with mothers that they had never dared hope to see again? I had no husband—and no new baby, naturally. The best we could do in the baby line was three terribly ugly and at the same time de-



licious baby canaries, and a half a dozen tiny yellow ducks, whose mother is a hen, and who looks at them as if to say, "Where do they get those noses? Their father was so nice-looking." I had my dear mother with me every minute. In fact, we arranged not to be more than ten yards apart during the War, so that if a shell with one of our names on it came, we could make it read—"and family." The Siamese Twins were estranged, compared to us. Yet I was so glad to be home that I put a record on the Victor, and despite the fact that it was so hot that the canaries were panting, I danced for twenty minutes just from sheer joy.

I've been home just a week today, and so much has happened. I've been in town four times, and each time something wonderful has happened. I've been cheered in theaters, I've been made the Commanding Officer of the 94th Flying Squadron, the greatest bunch of flying heroes ever. I have been presented with a medal by General O'Ryan from the New York boys of the A.E.F. I've flooded the stage of the Globe Theater, where it was presented to me, with tears, not because I got a medal, but because engraved on it were the words "In loving and grateful appreciation." The loving is what got me. I don't want anyone to thank me, but I do hope they mean it when they say "*loving*." All this has happened, and I am still baffled, as I said through my tears after the super T.A.G. pinned the





ON SHIPBOARD





medal on me: "It's all bull! (more tears). Just why they should give me a medal for spending the happiest days of my life with a lot of *regular guys*, I don't see!" and I stumbled off, or swam off the stage, sobbing.

Well, it's all over, our wonderful war, and I am wondering what the future holds for our wonderful warriors? I find New York very little blemished by the scourge of war, and certainly not chastened. Surely our returning boys whose mothers, wives and sweethearts dreaded the thought of their boys going to that wicked city, Paris, will all agree that Paris is a sweet girl graduate compared to New York, at least in the theaters and roof garden shows. Goodness knows, I am not narrow except around the hips. By the time I was sixteen I had been all over Paris. Mother had taken me for fear I would break my neck crawling out of some window to go, if she refused, and since then we have been going some, all over the world. My ideas have always been so broad that most of my friends wear shock absorbers. This time New York has not surprised but numbed me. In Paris I've seen girls without a "shimmy," but I would rather see a French girl without one than see an American girl "shaking one." I suppose this will all blow over—not the "shimmy," but the craze, and I sincerely hope so, because one of the most wonderful things in the A.E.F. was the absolute and undying

respect the American soldiers had for the American girl. They put them on a pedestal that grew and grew with each succeeding day the boys spent in France. The more he saw of other women, the more he boosted the girl at home, until she was almost too high to be human. Well, I want her to be human, but I won't agree that you can "shake the shimmy" on a pedestal. I don't say all the nice girls are doing it, but they certainly are standing for its existence, for everywhere I go I see it. I hope it is only in New York, because nothing goes very far there, least of all the evening dresses. I never saw so many girls with so few clothes. It's a case of

A little tulle,  
A yard of silk,  
A lot of skin as white as milk.  
Is it wished on?  
How dares she breathe?  
A little cough,  
Good-evening, Eve!

To get back to what's going to happen to the boys—not that the above has anything to do with it. I don't see any of them about—I long for the sight of them. They must be somewhere, and if you have one in your home, please, oh please, don't stop making a hero of him just because he is not dressed for the part any more. Say the same little prayer

you said for him when he was "over there." I have just subscribed five hundred dollars a year to the Aero Club, a little bit toward keeping a place where our boys can meet and meet again. Long after the War is over and the world has forgotten that they were heroes they will be able to talk of the days when they were.

I approve of the League of Nations. I think it's a great idea for the nations all to get together and produce the next war like one big syndicate. But if I may voice a poor, feeble little opinion, most of the men liked the War, and most men will always like war, and as long as there are women to fight for, men will fight, so if they really want to do away with war they must exterminate women. We must not kill the spirit that won the War; we must not forget that for every dear lad who was lost at least ten were made into real men. I've seen them in training camps—little, weazened, stoop-shouldered boys out of some office, and I've seen the same outfit two months later, with a light in their eyes and medals on their chests. I've seen a man in England who used to wear pale pink shirts, and smell so strong of Mary Garden perfume that I suspected him of having seen her in "Thaïs," go to war and come back with a Victoria Cross for rescuing seven wounded men under machine-gun fire. Oh, war had its good points! The slaughter was horrible—but after all, influenza killed six millions!



That's that, and I really ought to hire a hall or start another war, but before I do I just want to tell you about two big darkies who were talking, one day after the Armistice. One was wearing a *Croix de Guerre*.

His friend said, "What's dat you-all got on you' chest?"

"Why, dat's a cross de guerre."

"How did you get it?"

"Oh, I just went out and captured a machine-gun, and killed all the crew, and brought the gun back, and for that I got a cross de guerre."

"Well," said his friend, "you go tell another one and get me a-cross de ocean."

Now, I must call a halt. I love talking, and as I can't talk to everyone, I like writing. Just a few words in parting to the women: You have been wonderful—and while I love men, I also love the women that make the men the regular, honest-to-goodness, fine fellows they are. Will the ladies kindly take a bow, and let's agree, the War is dead. Long live the War—or at least the men who helped win it!

## IRISH PHILOSOPHY

You may feel a lot of sadness  
Without really being sad,  
You may sense a touch of gladness  
Without really being glad;  
You may even feel some madness  
Without being truly mad,  
But if you feel a bit of badness—  
Then look out!

For a little bit of sadness  
Will catch a fellow's eye,  
And a little bit of gladness  
Will send his spirits high;  
And with a little madness  
You might very well get by,  
But when it comes to badness—  
There's a doubt.

For there's sadness that depresses,  
And there's madness that distresses,  
Also gladness that expresses  
What the joy of life's about.  
You can do without the gladness,  
Or the sadness,  
Or the madness,  
But that little bit of badness  
People cannot live without.













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